

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND POSITIVE INTERGROUP BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Concerns of Intergroup Behaviour Are Such That Are Focused on Strengthening Workplace Relationships, And Ensuring Cohesion Within the Organization. Effective Organizations Are Such That Manifest Systemic Features and The Integration of Functions, Levels and Groups. Given The Possible Implications of Groupings Based on Religion and Other Related Spirituality Practices on The Perceptions and Self-Categorization of Individuals, This Paper Empirically Addressed the Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality and Positive Intergroup Behaviour in Public Organizations Situated in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A Correlational Design Was Adopted and Data Generated Using the Structured Questionnaire From 6 Public Organizations. Findings Affirm to The Manifestations and Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality and Positive Intergroup Behaviour (Intergroup Trust, Collaboration and Support). It Was Concluded That Workplace Spirituality Offers, Within the Framework of The Organization, A Favourable Disposition Towards Other Groups – Necessitated Most Likely by The Overarching Values of The Organization and The Shared Identity of Organizational Membership.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality, Positive Intergroup Behaviour, Collaboration, Trust, Support.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals Bring with Them to Work, A Sense of Belongingness and Affiliation to Various Social Categories (Adu, 2009). Bornstein (2003) Describe This as Prevalent Amongst Workers. This Is Because Apart from The Their Feelings of Categorization on The Basis of Membership of The Organization, Workers Tend to Define and Express Self-Identities on The Basis Of Diverse Groupings Such As Their Age, Religion, Work Experience, Qualification And Even Ideologies (Bornstein, 2003). This Way, They Tend to Identify More with Others Perceived or Noted to Share The Similar Characteristics And As Such, Same Categories Or Grouping Within The Organization. Strong Levels of Identification with Particular Groups Impose On The Perceptions And Behaviour Of Workers - Creating Mutuality And Bonding Between Members Of The Same Category And Influencing Their Perceptions Of Others (Al Ramiah & Miles, 2013). Barlow (2012) Posited That That Such Self-Categories And Identifications Is Multi-Levelled As One Particular Worker Could Associate And Identify With Several Groups At The Same Time As Long Their Perceptions Of Self Draw On Such Groupings.

Intra-Group Behaviour Influences Workplace Outcomes And Be Can A Challenge For Organizations Where Control Or Effective Leadership Is Lacking (Bornstein, 2003). Ahiauzu And Asawo (2012) Argued That In Nigerian Public Organizations, Given The Multitude Of Ethnic Groups And The Freedom Of Religious Practice, Group Dynamics Poses A Major Concern. Reports Suggest Increasing Levels Of Distraught And Poor Collaboration Linked To Inadequate Interfunctional Coordination Within These Organizations (Scacco & Shana, 2018; Muhammed, Ayinla & Adeoye, 2006). These Have Contributed To The Poor Service Quality And Notoriety Of These Organizations When It Comes To Performance. Muhammed Et Al (2006) Identified Societal Divisions And The Negative Perceptions Of Other Tribes Or Religious Groups By Others

As Spilling Over Into Work Systems And Thus, Leading To A Deterioration Of Trust Between Groups And As Such Toxic Workplaces – Lacking In Cooperation And Cohesion. One Is Therefore Tempted To Question The Implications Of Group Reinforced Practices, Such As That Of Spirituality Within The Workplace, And Its Possible Impact On The Inter-Group Behaviour.

Garcia-Zamor (2003) Identified Workplace Spirituality As A Significant Predictor Of Organizational Performance. The Author Argued That Through The Expressions Of Spirituality, Members Are Able To Transcend Triviality And Work Harmoniously With Others Towards The Goals Of The Organization. Kumar (2016) Posited That Workplace Spirituality Enhances Workers Confidence And Sense Of Fulfilment Within Their Organizations. It Is As The Author Described, Necessary For Strengthening The Commitment Of The Employees. Most Studies (Nasurdin, Nejati & Mej, 2013; Karakas, 2010; Bansal, 2015) On Workplace Spirituality Appear To Tread An Individualistic Perspective Of The Concept – With Scarce Interest On Its Implications For Attitudes Or Behaviour Towards Other Groups That Differ Or Subscribe To Other Religious Practices Dissimilar To That Of The Individual. Focus In This Area Is Thus Justified on The Basis of The Ongoing Strive and Distrust Between Dominant Religious Groups Such as The Christians and Muslims In Nigeria, Including The Manifestation Of Such Within Public Organizations In The Country (Muhammed Et Al, 2006; Ajala, 2013). This Paper Therefore Investigated the Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality and Positive Inter-Group Behaviour in Nigerian Public Organizations.

Review Of Literature

The Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory Explains Individual Behaviour and Self-Perceptions from The Premise of Group Association or Identification (Turner, 1982; Terry, Hogg & Mckimmie, 2000). Gaertner And John (2014) Posited That Identities Are Social Concepts Hinged on The Perception of Individuals About Themselves Within Social Settings. It Is What Uniquely Separates and Distinguishes One Individual or Worker from The Other As It Forms A Basis For Describing And Characterizing The Individual. Gubler (2013) Observed That When It Comes to Relationships, Social Categories Are Often Adopted by Individuals in Defining Themselves. While The Perceptions Of Self As Christian Or Muslim, Education And Experience Are More Relative As Members Could Easily Shift Across Related Categories, Others Such As Age, Height, Race And Complexion Are Biological And Fixed – Thus Having A More Stable And Established Form Of Categorization Outside The Choice Of The Individual (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Terry Et Al, 2000; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). The Social Identity Theory Thus Predicts Behaviour On The Basis Of Such Categorizations – Its Tenets Therefore Suggest, That Workers Will Be More Defensive With Regards To Their Groups Also More Trusting Of Members Of Their Own Groups Compared To Those Of Other Groups.

Workplace Spirituality

Spirituality At Work, Otherwise Termed – Workplace Spirituality, Describes Workers Expression Of Their Faith And Spiritual Values At Work (Mojoyinola & Ajala, 2012; Karakas, 2010). As An Organizational Phenomenon, It Is A Reflection Of How Tolerant And Accommodating Organizations Are Of Religious Practices, Faith Expressions And Spirituality By The Workers. Paloutzian, Emmons And Keortge (2003) Argued That Workplace Spirituality Enriches The Quality Of Work-Life Of Employees, Adding To Their Perceptions Of Self And Enabling A More Conducive Environment Appreciative Of Non-Material Values And Spiritual Principles. This Agrees With Daniel (2010) Observation That Spirituality Is A Lens Through Which The Individual Perceives Himself And Others – Hence, It Goes A Long Way In Determining Workers Relationships And The Nature Of Their Wellbeing Within The Organization. While Research (Petchsawanga & Duchon, 2012; Kolodinsky, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2008) Appears To Favour A Subjective Approach

Towards The Concept, One Could Argue That It Is Also Objective – In That It Is Discernable And Expressed Through Actions Such As Ones Relationship And Treatment Of Others, Morality, And Even The Extent To Which Ones Choices Reflect Selflessness.

Ajala And Mojinyinola (2013) Posited That Spirituality At Work Prescribes A More Sincere And Honest Approach, Cognizant Of Higher Dimensions Than Those Evident Or Physical, And In Most Cases, Obligated By Supernatural Beings Or Gods. These Features Of Spirituality Suggest That Not Only Do Spiritually Inclined Workers Hold Themselves Accountable To The Management Or Their Employers; They Also Consider Themselves Accountable To Their Faith And The Various Beings That Are The Target Of Their Worship. Thus One Finds Within The Context Of Workplace Spirituality, Pointers To Meaningfulness, Consciousness, Transcendence, Mindfulness And An Increased Level Of Empathy For Others. Kumar (2016) Argued That One Of The Aims Of Spirituality Is An Elevation Of Self From The Turmoil Of The Physical Through A Conscious And Deliberate Focus On The Non-Material Or The Spiritual. This View Is Shared By Ahiauzu And Asawo (2012) Who Affirmed That Spiritually Inclined Workers Are More Altruistic, Selfless And Always Willing To Share Their Experiences And Personal "Truth" With Others, Especially Those Within Other Religious Or Faith-Based Groups As A Way Of Convincing Them Of The Validity Of Their Experiences And By That Winning Them Over.

Positive Intergroup Behaviour

The Relationship Between Groups Or Units Within The Workplace Is Important To The Wellbeing And Health Of The Organization (Barlow, 2012). Such A Relationship Fundamentally Determines The Nature Or Exchange Between Units And Functions Of The Organization, The Level Of Support Offered By Groups Towards Other Groups Towards The Organization As A Whole, And Also The Extent To Which Groups Are Able To Trust And Work Effectively With Members Of Other Groups Within The Organization (Burns, Lucia & Eliana, 2015). Positive Intergroup Behaviour Describes The Favourable Disposition Of Members Of A Particular Group Towards Those Of Other Groups Within The Same Organization. It Is As Such A Demonstration Of Trust In Members Of Out-Groups, A Willingness To Collaborate With Such Members And Also Actions Of Support For Such Groups (Ditlmann, Cyrus & Thomas, 2017). Positive Intergroup Behaviour Ensures Cohesion Within The Organization – Thus Enabling A More Efficient And Effective Organizational System. In Their Study Van Dessel, Sean & Jan (2019) Showed That Group Perceptions Were Often Pervasive Amongst Members As Beliefs, Fears And Values Are Crystallized And Become Realities To Members.

Mcdougal (2015) Posited That Organizations Stand To Benefit More When There Is Good Communication And Support Between The Various Groups Within Their Structure Or Framework And Healthy Interfunctional Coordination. This Corroborates Bornstein (2003) Observation That Where Groups Fail To Agree Or Collaborate, Then Factions, Cliques And Other Forms Of Division Could Emerge Which Further The Conflict And The Frustration Of The Organization In Line With Goal Accomplishment.

Christ (2014) Argued That The Development Of Trust, And The Openness Towards Collaborating And Supporting Others Considered As Out-Group Members Begins With A Re-Assessment Of Self, Role And Ones Link Or Ties To Such Groups. It Addresses The Inherent Assumptions Of Competition Between Groups And The Re-Evaluation Of The Nature Of The Primary Concerns Of The Organization. Audu (2009) Opined That While The Dominant Belief Of Most Organizational Groups Bothers On The Securing Of Group Interest And Position Due To Concerns Of Insufficient Resources, A Healthier Approach Entails The Understanding That Collaboration, Rather Than Competition Offers More And Creates A Framework Where Groups Can Work Seamlessly Towards The Same Goals.

Workplace Spirituality And Positive Intergroup Behaviour

Scacco And Shana (2018) Opined That Groups And Their Values Shape The Realities And Attitudes Of Their Members Towards Others. However, This Is Contrasted By Gaertner And John (2014) Who Argued That The Views That The External, Influences The Attitudes And Perceptions Of Workers Hold True Only To A Certain Degree And Within Particular Contexts. According To Paloutzian Et Al (2003), Attitudes And Behaviour Also Emerge Voluntarily From The Expectations, Experiences And Interpretations Of Workers. In The Same Vein, Ajala (2013) Stated That The Practice Of Workplace Spirituality Offers Clarity On Ones Values Through A Deeper Assessment Of Self.

Ajala (2013) Noted That Despite The Pressure From The External Environment; Spiritually Inclined Individuals Have The Capacity To Sustain Their Values, Especially Since Such Actions Satisfy Inherent And Underlying Needs For Meaning And Purpose. Ajala (2013) Added, That The Attachment Of Individuals To Values And Self-Improvement Goals That Lie Outside Or Above The Physical Features And Activities Of The Organization, Also Enables Their Transcendence Over Petty Workplace Quarrels, Competition And Fears – Enabling A Focus On Other Intangible Rewards That Are More Embracing Of Others As A Result Of The Need To Connect With The Divine.

Workplace Spirituality And Intergroup Trust: Burns Et Al (2015) Argued That Trust For Other Groups Is The Necessary Foundation To Effectively Working And Relating With Such Groups. Trust Relaxes The Tensions Between Groups And Ensures That Members Are Able To Communicate And Understand Significant Others Without Unnecessary Bias Or Suspicions. This Is As Burns Et Al (2015) Posited That To Trust Implies Placing One's Confidence In Another's Competence, Reliability And Capacities. It Implies That Workers Are Willing To Be Vulnerable In Their Dealings With The Members Of Other Groups Within The Organization, And This Requires An Acceptance Of The Significance Or Importance Of Such Groups To The Individual Or Organization. Workplace Spirituality Emphasizes On The Connectedness Between The Individual And Others. It Stresses On The Imperatives Of Seeing The Good And Potentials In Others And Being Selfless In Service And Actions Towards Others. This Paper Thus Hypothesized As Follows:
H₁: Workplace Spirituality Significantly Correlates With Intergroup Trust In Nigerian Public Organizations

Workplace Spirituality And Intergroup Collaboration: The Structuring Of African Work Systems, Much Like Any Work System Across The World, Emphasizes On The Interrelatedness And Collaboration Between Groups And Units For Its Success. Ajala (2013) Identified Spirituality As A Practice Which Is Rooted In The Goal Of Finding Meaning. Although, Studies Agree To The Specificity Of Faiths As There Is No Universally Accepted Faith Or Religion – Suggesting Possible Divides From The Various Groupings And Categorizations Offered By Each Practice, Nonetheless, Daniel (2010) Argued That The Core Tenets Of Spirituality Anchor On Building Better And Stronger Relationships.

According To Ahiauzu And Asawo (2012), Spirituality Thus Advances Harmony Within And Outside Of Self – Engaging Others In Ways That Allow For Collaboration And Cooperation. This Agrees With The Assertions Of Muhammed Et Al (2006) That While Misconceptions About Faiths Prevail From The Selfish Agendas Of A Few And The Manipulation Of Some Towards Ends That Have No Moral Or Humane Objective, True Spirituality Is Embracing And More Accommodating Of The Differences That Exists Between Peoples And Cultures. Thus, This Paper Hypothesized As Follows:

H₂: Workplace Spirituality Significantly Correlates With Intergroup Collaboration In Nigerian Public Organizations

Workplace Spirituality And Intergroup Support: Burns Et Al (2015) Posited That The Workplace Is One Which Also Serves As A Social Community And Renders Support To Its Members. The Relationship Between Members Of The Organization Context Therefore Bothers On The Extent To Which They Are Considered As Supportive Of Others And By That Relevant Or

Useful To The Entire Framework. This Also Suggests That Group Members Should Be Ready To Volunteer When Necessary, And Lend Their Support To Members Of Other Groups. Gubler (2013) Affirmed That Given A Perception Of Competition Between The Groups, The Idea Of Intergroup Support Might Seem Impossible.

However, Where There Is An Understanding Of The Systemic Nature Of Relationships And Its Impact On The Wellbeing Of The Organization; And Where Organizational Concerns And Interests Are Prioritized Over Intragroup Interests – There Is A Higher Tendency For Support (Bornstein, 2003). Spirituality At The Workplace Identifies With A Transcending Of Physical And Material Concerns – Placing Meaning And Purpose In Higher Values. A Consciousness Of One's Position Within The Context Of The Organization And The Implications Of Their Failure To Adequately Carry Out Their Obligations Is Likely To Advance A Shift In Their Perspective Or Behaviour From Negative To Positive. Thus, This Paper Thus Hypothesized As Follows:

H₃: Workplace Spirituality Significantly Correlates With Intergroup Support In Nigerian Public Organizations

METHODOLOGY

The Quantitative Methodology Is Adopted For This Research, Drawing On An Underpinning Positivism Philosophical Paradigm (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). In The Same Vein, A Deductive Approach Is Applied As The Test For Hypothesis Premised On Validating The Social Identity Theory In Line With Its Assumptions Concerning Intergroup Behaviour In The Nigerian Public Organizations. The Study Also Adopts A Correlational Design, Given The Structure Of The Paper Which Is Aimed At Establishing The Relationship Between Variables Of Interest (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The Accessible Population For The Study Comprised Of 90 Fulltime And Regular Staff From 6 Public Organizations, Drawn From The 3 Ministries – (A) Lands And Housing, (B) Environment, And (C) Transport In Bayelsa State. Units Of Measurement Identified Within The Population Framework Were Sifted Based On Criteria Of Not Less Than 10 Years Work Experience In The Organization And Regularized Employment With The Organization. The Structured Questionnaire Instrument Was Adopted For The Collection Of Primary Data. The Instrument For Workplace Spirituality Was Adapted From Ajala (2013) While That Of Positive Intergroup Behaviour Was Adapted From That Of Gaetner And John (2014). The Instruments For The Study Are Designed As 5-Item Instruments And All Scaled On A 5-Point Likert Of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Agree And 5 = Strongly Disagree. The Results For The Cronbach Reliability Test For The Instruments Revealed Alpha Coefficients Of $\alpha > 0.70$ For All Instruments Adapted In The Study.

Data Results

Fieldwork For The Study Entailed Correspondence With Key Personnel Within The Public Organizations Who Assisted In The Distribution And Retrieval Of Questionnaire Copies. While 90 Copies Were Of The Questionnaire Were Successfully Distributed Across The 6 Public Organizations, Only 78 Copies Were Retrieved – Cleaned And Duly Coded Into Cases For The Analysis Of The Study.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Analysis On The Distributions Included The Assessment Of Groupings Based On Gender And Religion Across The Participants, And The Summarized Univariate Distributions For The Variables.

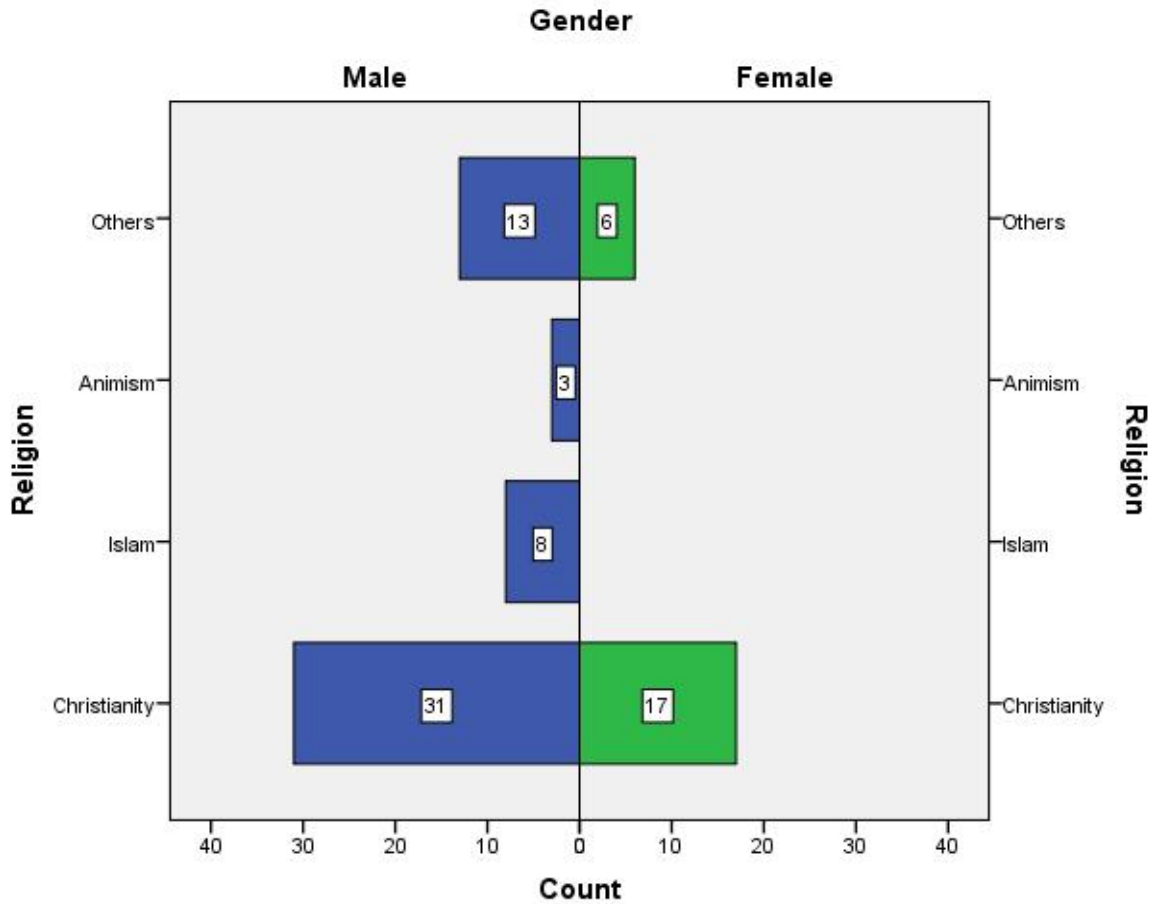


Figure 1: Population Pyramid For The Distribution For Gender And Religion. Evidence Reveals A Higher Percentage Of The Participants Practice Christianity Out Of Which Male Account For 31 And Female Account For A Frequency Of 17. This Is Followed By The Number That Practice Islam, With Evidence Indicating Only Male Account For The Practice With A Frequency Of 8. For The Category For Animism, Results Showed That Only Male Practitioners Were Also Availed Within The Public Organizations With A Frequency Of 3. The Category For Others - Which Captured The Distribution For Participants With Religious Practices Or Affiliations Unaccounted For By The Listed Groups, The Male Participants Accounted For A Frequency Of 13, While The Female Accounted For Just 6. Results Indicate A More Dominant Male Distribution Within The Organizations, And On All Categories Listed Within The Study.

Table 1: Summaries For Univariate Distribution For The Variables

		Workplace Spirituality	Intergroup Trust	Intergroup Collaboration	Intergroup Support
N	Valid	78	78	78	78
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.4167	3.4519	3.0513	3.8141
Std. Deviation		.89883	.80588	.91378	1.07694
Skewness		-1.003	-1.737	-1.138	-1.155
Std. Error Of Skewness		.272	.272	.272	.272

Kurtosis	.302	1.826	-.057	.275
Std. Error Of Kurtosis	.538	.538	.538	.538

Source: Spss Data Output, 2021

Evidence On The Univariate Distributions For The Variables Suggest Participants Affirm To The Practice Of Workplace Spirituality Within The Public Organizations ($X = 3.4167$), Express Trust For Other Groups Within The Same Organization ($X = 3.4519$), Are Open And Willing To Collaborate With Members From Other Groups Within The Workplace ($X = 3.0513$) And Are Supportive Of Other Groups Within The Organization ($X = 3.8141$).

Inferential Analysis

Table 2: Tests For The Relationship Between The Variables

		Workplace Spirituality	Intergroup Trust	Intergroup Collaboration	Intergroup Support
Workplace Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.777**	.535**	.982**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	78	78	78	78
Intergroup Trust	Pearson Correlation	.777**	1	.629**	.796**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	78	78	78	78
Intergroup Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.629**	1	.515**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	78	78	78	78
Intergroup Support	Pearson Correlation	.982**	.796**	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	78	78	78	78

Source: Spss Data Output, 2021

Evidence On The Test For The Hypotheses Of The Study Reveals That The Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality And The Measures Of Positive Intergroup Behaviour Is Significant. At A $Rho = 0.777$; And $P < 0.05$, Workplace Spirituality Is Observed To Contribute Significantly And Positively Towards Workers Intergroup Trust. At A $Rho = 0.535$ And $P < 0.05$. Workplace Spirituality Is Noted To Significantly Enhance Workers Intergroup Collaboration. Also, At A $Rho = 0.982$ And $P < 0.05$, Workplace Spirituality Can Be Considered As Significantly Predicting Positive Outcomes Of Workers Intergroup Support. Subsequently, All Null Hypotheses Are On The Basis Of The Results Rejected. This Is As The Findings Suggest That Workplace Spirituality Provides For A More Positive And Conducive Perspective Of Other Groups And Enhances Positive Intergroup Behaviour Within The Public Organizations, In Bayelsa, Nigeria.

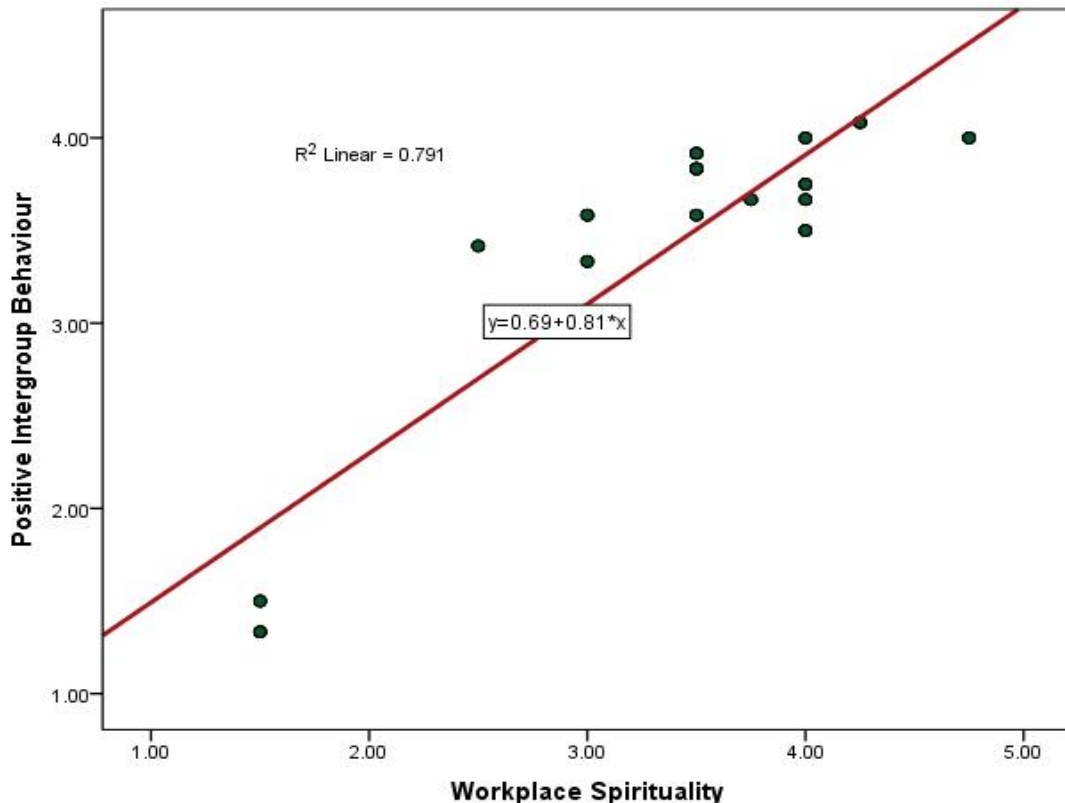


Figure 2: Scatter Diagram For Workplace Spirituality And Positive Intergroup Behaviour
The Scatter Diagram For The Relationship Between The Variables, Demonstrates High Correlation Between Workplace Spirituality And Positive Intergroup Behaviour. Evidence Indicates That The Relationship Between The Variables Is Positive With An $R^2 = 0.791$, Implying That A 79% Level Of Change In Positive Intergroup Behaviour And The Favourable Disposition Of Workers Towards Others Within Other Groups, Can Be Accounted For By Their Spirituality.

Discussion Of The Findings

Findings Indicate A More Prevailing Christian Religion And Workplace Practice Amongst Workers Within The Public Organizations In Bayelsa State, Nigeria. While Practices Such As Islam And Animism Are Evident, These However Account For Only A Small Percentage Of The Workforce. The Outcome Of The Analysis Further Indicates The Substantiality Of Such Practices And In The Same Vein The Openness Of Workers Towards Members Of Other Groups, And Towards Collaborating And Supporting These Groups. It Is Evident Thus That The Categorization Of Religion Between The Groups Does Not Pose Any Major Barrier To Their Work Relations And Correspondence Within The Organization. This Could Be As A Result Of Other Overarching Policies Which Ensure And Emphasize Of Integration And The Interdependency Of These Groups Within The Workplace Or Other Underlying Factors Such As The Shared Ideologies And Values Of The Organization (Gaetner & John, 2014).

The Evidence Generated Validates The Social Identity Theory On The Basis Of Cross-Categorical Values And Ideologies That Not Only Unite But Enable Workers Favourable Disposition To Members Of Other Groups – Such As That Advanced By The Framework Of The Organization. This Way The Findings Agree With Those Of Gaetner And John (2014) That Despite Members Self-Categorization On The Basis Of Religious Affiliation, Workplace Policies And Functional Structures Yet Enable A Higher And More Dominant Grouping Which Provides The Worker With A Sense Of Belonging And Placement And Which Bears Strongly On Their Perceptions And Interpretations Of Others More Than That Of The Society (Bornstein, 2003). This Is Evident In The Manifestations Of The Variable And The Strong Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality

And All Three Measures Of Positive Intergroup Behaviour; With Intergroup Support Have The Highest And Strongest Correlation With Spirituality.

CONCLUSION

Group Dynamics Within The Workplace Is An Increasing Concern For Business Organizations Across Africa. This Owes To The Increasing Multiplicity Of Ethnic And Cultural Groups Across The Continent And The Noted Impact Of Religion On The Social Fabrics Of The Context. Concerns Of Such Have Over Time Spilled Into The Workplace, Bothering On The Nature Of Intergroup Relations And Perceptions. This Paper Has Demonstrated That While Manifestations Of Workplace Spirituality Are Evident And Substantially Expressed Within Public Organizations Within The Context Of Nigeria, They However Contribute Meaningfully Towards Improved Levels Of Intergroup Collaboration, Trust And Support. Groupings In Line With The Identified Religious Groups In This Paper (Christianity, Islam And Animism), Appear To Share A Sense Of Identity With Other Groups And As Such Are Favourably Disposed Towards Other Groups. This Contributes Towards Their Willingness To Trust, Collaborate And Support Other Groups.

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