

Impact of Authentic Leadership on Employee Well-Being in Commodity Market: A Case of Nigeria's Cocoa Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and employee well-being in the Nigerian cocoa sector, a key commodity market in the country. Authentic leadership is characterized by self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective, and has been linked to positive employee outcomes in various contexts. Using a case study approach, this research examined the experiences of employees in the Nigerian cocoa industry to understand how authentic leadership behaviours exhibited by employers and managers influence factors such as organizational commitment, work-life balance, and overall well-being. Data were collected through interviews of Nigeria cocoa sector employees to gain a holistic perspective. Findings revealed that the Nigerian cocoa sectors comply with minimum legal requirements but do not proactively go beyond those standards, and that they provide basic healthcare benefits and adhere to safety regulations but lack comprehensive well-being programs. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the scholarly literature on authentic leadership and its application in non-Western, developing economy settings. It will also provide practical insights for Nigerian cocoa organisations and policymakers on fostering leadership practices that promote leaders' authenticity, employee thriving and sustainable business performance. The results may have broader implications for leadership development and human resource management strategies in Nigeria's vital commodity markets.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Employee Well-Being, Commodity Market, Cocoa Industry, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The cocoa industry has played a substantial impact on Nigeria's economy for the past 60 years, making important contributions to export earnings, creating jobs and development of rural communities where cocoa is produced. The well-being of employees is also essential for the sustained growth and development of organisations involved in cocoa business. Employee

well-being involves several dimensions such as physical, psychological and emotional well-being in ensuring productivity, fostering innovation, and maintaining a competitive edge within the industry. Studies had shown that the well-being of workers has emerged as a vital variable that greatly impacts organisation's performance, productivity, and success in today's dynamic and continuously shifting organisational environment and so when it comes to influencing the workplace and promoting employee well-being, leader's roles are extremely vital (Hanu & Khumalo 2024).

The commodity industry like any other sector in Nigeria is facing unique challenges, such as fluctuating global prices, environmental concerns, regulatory complexities, and socio-economic disparities and ethical cocoa sourcing issues. In the context of Nigeria's cocoa industry, authentic leadership has emerged as a potential driver of employee well-being. According to Gardner et al. (2021) authentic leadership is shown by people who possess a strong sense of integrity, assume accountability for their actions, and make principled judgments rather than focusing on immediate achievements. Authentic leaders rely on their own moral convictions to direct their everyday behaviours, allowing them to gain the confidence of their employees, colleagues, and shareholders, establishing accessible work environments and enhancing team productivity. Gardner et al. (2021) suggests that restoring confidence in organisations involves being authentic and true to oneself, rather than trying to cultivate a leader's image. Authentic leaders demonstrate self-discipline through consistency and self-diligence.

Authentic leadership has equally gained prominence in recent years as a potential method that emphasizes genuineness, transparency, and ethical conduct. Authentic leaders exhibit self-awareness, relational transparency, an internalized moral viewpoint and use balanced decision-making procedures. According to Erickson (2021), relational transparency refers to the openness, honesty, and clarity in communication and interactions between individuals, teams, or organisations. It involves sharing information, expressing intentions, and maintaining a clear and understandable relationship with others. Furthermore, Tijani and Okunbanjo (2020) explained internalized moral viewpoint as a person's unique collection of moral standards, convictions, and values that direct their actions and choices. It is a moral compass that is formed by a mix of inborn inclinations, socialisation and introspection.

The cocoa business in Nigeria plays a crucial role in the national economy and provides employment opportunities for a considerable workforce, including farmers, workers, and industry experts. Gaining insight into the effects of authentic leadership practices on employee well-being in this sector is essential for establishing nurturing work environments, fostering sustainable growth, and enhancing the entire work experience for persons engaged in cocoa production. The implementation of authentic leadership methods has been linked to favourable results in terms of staff engagement, dedication, and performance. Through an analysis of the influence of genuine leadership on the welfare of employees in the cocoa industry, this study can make a valuable contribution to sustainable development by fostering a favourable workplace atmosphere, and improving the socio-economic welfare of individuals engaged in cocoa production.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's cocoa industry being a significant contributor to the economy, employees in this sector face numerous challenges that negatively affect well-being. Research has shown that

leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping employee outcomes. However, there is paucity of studies that examine the specific impact of authentic leadership on employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa industry. Undertaking this study will contribute to bridging the current research vacuum and provide useful perspectives on the distinctive dynamics of the cocoa sector in Nigeria. The cocoa business in Nigeria plays a crucial role in the national economy and provides employment opportunities for a considerable workforce, including farmers, workers, and industry experts. Gaining insight into the impact of authentic leadership practices on employee well-being in this sector is essential for establishing nurturing work environments, fostering sustainable growth, and enhancing the entire work experience for persons engaged in cocoa production. Although there have been several studies that have explored the practical implications of authentic leadership for employee well-being in various industries. There is a limited number of studies specifically examining the relationship between authenticity and well-being in the Nigeria cocoa context. Authenticity and well-being are broad concepts (Sutton 2020) but there may be a scarcity of research that specifically investigates this relationship within the unique context of the Nigeria cocoa industry. More research is needed to understand how authenticity influences well-being in this specific industry, and this is a gap this study seeks to cover.

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of authentic leadership on employee well-being in the cocoa industry in Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were asked:

1. What are the well-being challenges employees face within the cocoa industry?
2. To what extent do you think authentic leadership influence employee well-being in the Nigeria Cocoa Industry?
3. How do barriers to authentic leadership affect employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa sector?
4. What are the strategies to promote authentic leadership and to improve employee well-being in Nigeria cocoa sector?

Significance and Importance of the Study

The significance of this study comes from the topic, which is centred on the effect of authentic leadership on employee well-being in commodity market, specifically, Nigeria's cocoa industry. From an academic standpoint, it adds to the existing literature by exploring the relationship between authentic leadership and employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa industry, a context that has received limited attention in the global academic literature. The findings will contribute to the understanding of leadership behaviours that promote employee well-being in the commodity market, specifically in the Nigerian cocoa industry. From a practical perspective, the study's findings will provide valuable insights for organisational leaders and policymakers in the cocoa industry. Understanding the impact of authentic leadership on employee well-being can guide the development and implementation of effective leadership strategies and practices that promote a healthier and more productive work environment. This study can make a valuable contribution to sustainable development by fostering a favourable workplace atmosphere, and improving the socio-economic welfare of individuals engaged in cocoa

production. Ultimately, this can lead to improved employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance in the cocoa industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review serves as a comprehensive examination of existing scholarly research and theoretical frameworks related to the topic.

Overview of Nigeria Cocoa Industry

Prior to the initial discovery of crude oil, agriculture served as the primary pillar of Nigeria's economy, making a significant contribution to the country's GDP and export revenue (Udeh et al. 2021). Nevertheless, Nigeria redirected its attention towards crude oil, resulting in a decrease in its agricultural production. Notwithstanding this decrease, cocoa continues to be the primary source of foreign currency earnings for the nation, excluding oil. The ongoing decrease in the price of crude oil is fuelling discussions about the need to diversify the economy by exploring industries like agriculture (Idris 2020). The cocoa business has shown significant potential for enhancing the country's economy and fostering job opportunities within the agricultural sector. When properly positioned, the sector will provide additional employment opportunities for farmers and other participants in the production value chain. Nigeria's cocoa industry is a major contributor to the country's economy, with the country being the fourth-largest cocoa producer globally as shown in Fig 1:

WORLD COCOA PRODUCTION							
Country	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21*	2021/22*	% Change 2021/20
-----1,000 metric tonnes-----							
Ivory Coast	2,020	1,964	2,154	2,105	2,200	2,125	-3
Brazil	174	204	176	201	180	190	+6
Ghana	969	905	812	800	1,060	850	-20
Nigeria	245	250	270	250	270	270	0
Indonesia	290	240	220	200	200	205	+2
Cameroon	246	250	280	280	290	285	-2
Ecuador	300	287	322	342	350	385	+10
Dominican Republic	57	85	75	75	75	75	0
Peru	116	135	141	151	150	155	+3
Others	351	327	337	356	360	375	+4
World Total	4,768	4,647	4,787	4,760	5,135	4,915	-4

*Foresight estimate
1 Cocoa T11

Fig 1: world cocoa production

Source: <https://www.cocoamachinery.com>

Production and Cultivation

The cocoa industry in Nigeria is primarily run by smallholder farmers, who face challenges such as limited access to finance, outdated farming practices, and inadequate infrastructure, which can impact productivity and quality (Thomas et al. 2022). Cocoa is primarily grown in the southern and central parts of Nigeria, with the major producing states being Ondo, Osun, Ogun,

Ekiti, and Cross River. Nigeria's cocoa production has fluctuated over the years, ranging from around 300,000 to 400,000 metric tons annually. The majority of cocoa farms in Nigeria are small-scale, with an average farm size of 2-5 hectares, operated by smallholder farmers. The country's cocoa production is characterized by aging tree stocks, low productivity, and the prevalence of pests and diseases, which have hindered the sector's growth (Fountain & Hütz-Adams, 2020)

Marketing and Export

Cocoa is a major non-oil export commodity for Nigeria, contributing significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings (Evbuomwan et al. 2020). The main export destinations for Nigerian cocoa include the Netherlands, Germany, Malaysia, and the United States. The cocoa marketing system in Nigeria involves a combination of private traders, cooperatives, and government agencies, with the Cocoa Association of Nigeria playing a key role in the industry. Nigeria exports most of its cocoa beans to international markets, with Europe, particularly the Netherlands, being the largest destination. Other key export destinations include the United States, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Wulandari and Widjojoko 2021). Despite the challenges of decreased output of cocoa production, the Nigerian government is promoting the growth of the cocoa industry through policies such as subsidized inputs, extension services, and loans (Olomu et al. 2020). It also encourages the establishment of cocoa processing facilities to add value to cocoa beans. Nigeria's cocoa processing capacity is still low compared to production volume, but efforts are being made to increase it. According to (Oduntan and Adegbuyi 2021), the government and industry stakeholders are working to improve cocoa quality through farmer training programs, certification schemes, and quality control measures. However, the industry faces challenges such as aging tree stock, pests and diseases, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and inconsistent government policies. Sustainable cocoa production practices are also gaining importance, with farmers adopting environmentally friendly farming methods, fair trade practices, and social responsibility to meet market demands (Tennhardt et al. 2022).

Definitions of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders, as defined by (Durrah 2023), are individuals who possess self-awareness of their values, strengths, shortcomings, and motivations. They actively seek feedback to enhance their understanding of themselves. Walker and Reichard (2020) also opined that authentic leaders synchronize their leadership with their fundamental principles and goal, motivating people to participate to a purposeful objective. (Mor Barak et al. 2022) also contributed that authentic leaders prioritize diversity, provide an inclusive atmosphere and maintain rigorous ethical principles. They also suggested that authentic leaders acknowledge that leadership is an ongoing process of development, adjusting their strategies to align with the changing requirements of their followers and the organisation. Van Droffelaar and Jacobs (2017) contributed that authentic leaders are influenced by their own experiences, values, beliefs, self-reflection, and mentoring.

Walumbwa Theoretical Approach to Authentic Leadership

The most widely acceptable theoretical framework and approach to authentic leadership is the theory propounded by Dr Fred O. Walumbwa in 2008 as illustrated in figure 1 below:

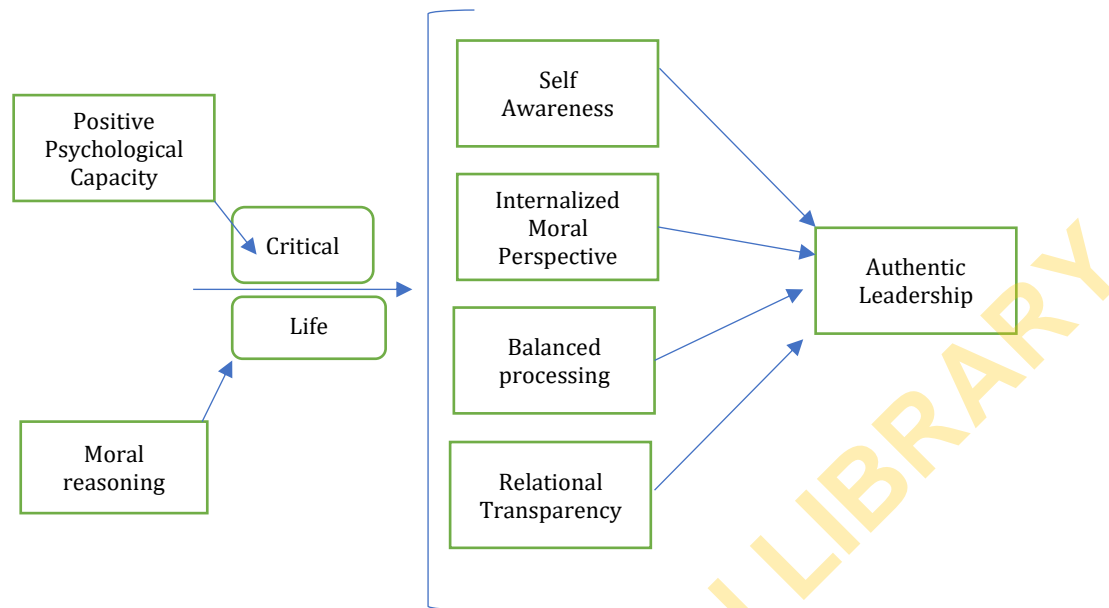


Fig 1: Authentic Leadership Framework Walumbwa et al. 2008

Walumbwa et al. (2008) have proposed a theoretical framework that highlights key elements of authentic leadership. According to this framework, authentic leadership comprises four main components:

Authentic Leadership Self-Awareness:

Self-awareness is considered a crucial foundation of authentic leadership. It involves leaders' ability to understand and reflect upon their own values, strengths, weaknesses, and emotions. Authentic leaders possess a clear sense of their own identity and purpose, which allows them to be genuine and true to themselves in their leadership roles.

Internalized Moral Perspective:

Authentic leaders have a strong internalized moral perspective, meaning they possess a well-defined set of moral values and principles. They act in accordance with these values and demonstrate ethical behaviour. Internalized moral perspective involves a deep commitment to doing what is right and just, guiding leaders' decisions and actions.

Balanced Processing:

Balanced processing refers to the ability of authentic leaders to objectively consider different viewpoints and information before making decisions. They actively seek input from others, encourage open dialogue, and are willing to revise their perspectives based on new information. Balanced processing helps leaders avoid biases and make fair and informed decisions.

Relational Transparency:

Authentic leaders engage in relational transparency, meaning they are open, honest, and genuine in their interactions with others. They build trust by sharing information, expressing their true thoughts and feelings, and being consistent in their words and actions. Relational transparency fosters positive relationships and creates an environment where followers feel comfortable and secure.

Walumbwa's framework highlights the importance of these four components in understanding and practicing authentic leadership. It emphasizes the significance of self-awareness, moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency in leadership effectiveness and follower outcomes. It's important to note that Walumbwa's work is just one perspective within the broader literature on authentic leadership. Other researchers have proposed different models and frameworks that capture additional dimensions and mechanisms of authentic leadership. These theories collectively contribute to our understanding of authentic leadership as a distinct and valuable leadership approach.

Employee Wellbeing

The study of organisations has identified employee well-being as a strategically important aspect that is of interest to both businesses and people (Pradhan and Hati 2022). It has also become a central focus of research in the field of leadership. However, (Wijngaards et al. 2021) suggested that shortage of a proper theoretical framework and model for assessing employee well-being in the workplace has made researchers demonstrate great interest in this area. A great deal of literature on the well-being of employees is well recorded in the field of organisational research. Nevertheless, there is still a significant lack of clarity and resolution about the entire knowledge, conceptual explanations, and understanding of employee well-being (Plough 2020). New Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th ed., 2005) defines 'well-being' as a condition characterized by comfort, good health, and contentment. It therefore suggests that Employee well-being refers to the overall physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of employees. Employee well-being is often described as the whole experience and functioning of an employee, taking into account both their physical and psychological characteristics (Juchnowic and Kinowska 2021).

According to (Dong and Yan 2022), past researches indicate that the concept of overall well-being does not sufficiently capture the state of employee well-being. It has dynamism, subjectivity, and multidimensionality. This mean that "well-being" may be divided into various elements or components. Ryff and Keyes (1995) did an investigation into many aspects of well-being and presented forth a model that encompasses several dimensions. The concept emphasizes three primary aspects of well-being: psychological well-being (PWB), social well-being, and emotional well-being. Der Kinderen and Khapova (2020) also noted that some researchers have proposed that employee well-being (EWB) should include both the psychological experiences and health condition that are related to both job and non-work aspects of life. However, Pradhan and Hati (2022) noted that employee well-being is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various interconnected elements such as physical well-being and psychological well-being. These elements, which are interrelated and influence each other, contribute to overall well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research method was adopted for this study, and gathering of primary data is through interviews within the Nigerian cocoa industry context, which is necessary to generate empirical insights for the findings and discussion. The purpose of conducting interviews is to gather in-depth and first-hand information from participants (Roller 2020). Interviews allow researchers to explore research questions, understand participants' perspectives and experiences, and gain insights that may not be captured through other data collection methods. The interviews were conducted through online process via zoom meeting, WhatsApp video or

audio call or Teams meeting as a result of proximity factor. This research limits its interviews to within employees in cocoa sector in Nigeria.

The ethics form was completed and submitted by March 2024 in order to conduct the study. In accordance with the policies set forth by the institution, all relevant ethical considerations, including respondent benefit, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and anonymity, were thoroughly examined throughout the research project. The approved ethical ID number is 56531 which was approved on 20/03/2024 19:54:09 by the university ethical committee of Bournemouth University. Also, informed consent for participation in the study has been obtained through phone conversation (verbal communication).

PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Gathering of primary data is through interviews, and observations within the Nigerian cocoa industry context, which is necessary to generate empirical insights for the findings and discussion.

Date	Respondents	Method of data collection	Location of data collection	Duration of Interview
23/3/2024	1	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	32.11 mins
24-3-2024	2	Interview via WhatsApp call	online	48.33 mins
24-3-2024	3	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	42.38 mins
25-3-2024	4	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	40.46 mins
25-3-2024	5	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	30.07 mins
26-3-2024	6	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	49.48 mins
26-3-2024	7	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	37.29 mins
28-3-2024	8	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	26.56 mins
04-04-2024	9	Interview via WhatsApp call	Online	50.02 mins

Respondents Profiling

This part of the research will focus on the profiling of the respondents. Profiling respondents enables the selection individuals who possess relevant expertise and experience pertaining to the subject matter. By focusing on employees in the Nigeria cocoa sector, the research work may get industry-specific insights that are relevant and significant, thus extensive experience in the cocoa sector can provide valuable insights into the impact of authentic leadership on employee well. For example, 100% of respondents have more than 10 years of working experience with an average of 14 years working in the Nigeria cocoa sector. 90% of respondents have worked for more than 1 organisations in the cocoa sector in Nigeria, while 95% of the respondents have had different role within the sector. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the unique perspectives, responsibilities, and challenges of different roles. The data collected from respondents with different experience levels enriches the analysis, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between leadership practices and employee well-being.

Analysis of Respondents' Interview

In order to analyse the data from the interviews, each question asked to the respondents is analysed in this section.

- **Research Question 1:** What are the well-being challenges employees face within the cocoa industry?

Participants are able to present several challenges facing employee on the Nigeria cocoa sector. As a general theme for this question, participants held that the major challenge to employee well-being is actually the “degree to which the leadership are authentic.” Poor leadership management according to the participant has culminated to other factors as illustrated in the figure below. While participants agreed that it is important for organisations to make more profit of the organisation’s sustainability, it is equally important to maintain the overall well-being of the employee who are the drivers of organisation policies and initiatives. However, few of the respondents are of the opinion that because their organisations prioritise employee well-being, they do not see much of these challenges. For example, Respondent 5 stated “I think my organisation is the best in terms of financial, social and career well-being”, he further explained that many employees from other organisations shows great interest in working for their organisation because of attractive financial package. Respondent 1 said “my organisation is poor in terms of well-being...I do not even have a health insurance.” Respondent 2 added that “I do not have a working contract so I don’t know what I am entitled to as an employee.”

- **Research Question 2:** To what extent do you think authentic leadership influence employee well-being in the Nigeria Cocoa Industry?

Every respondent of this research opined that authentic leadership will have a “positive” impact on employees’ well-being which has serve as a general theme for the question. As captured in the figure below, each respondent is able to identify the positive thing authentic leadership can generate for their well-being. For example, respondent 5 and 9 emphasised capacity building as an effect of authentic leadership. They explained the positive effects beyond materialism such as financial effects. Their organisation efforts in giving them trainings abroad has increase and build capacity to perform optimally. Respondent 9 added that his organisation has gone further to build entrepreneurial tendencies in employees especially the procurement department. This has enabled them to take independent decision adding value to the department and saving cost.

- **Research Question 3:** How do barriers to authentic leadership affect employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa sector?

Respondents demonstrate various effects barriers to authentic leadership has on employee well-being as shown in figure 7 below. For respondents who opined that their management leaders are not authentic enough, for example respondent 1 stated that he does not personally trust his employer.so he pointed out a lack of trust between himself and his organisation. Responses also shows respondents fearing for their future and careers and loss of confidence. Respondents 4 and 5 commented that a lack of motivation. Lack of motivation in employees can lead to decreased productivity, resulting in lower cocoa yields, quality, and overall production levels. This negatively impacts the profitability and competitiveness in organisations of the cocoa sector. Motivation is crucial for maintaining high-quality standards, as employees may not pay attention to detail, take shortcuts, or neglect quality control measures. This can lead to lower quality output, customer loss, reduced demand, and lower prices for cocoa products, ultimately affecting the reputation of Nigerian cocoa in the global market.

Respondents 7 and 8 offers some insights that has to do with mental and psychological effects employees in the Nigeria cocoa sector face in the absence of authentic leadership. Respondent 7 mention “emotional drainage” as an effect while respondent 8 mentioned “chronic stress, exhaustion”. Chronic stress resulting from a lack of authentic leaders can significantly impact employee well-being. Continuous exposure to stressful situations without adequate support or guidance can lead to physical and mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and work-life imbalance. The negative effects on well-being can further extend to personal relationships, overall quality of life, and job performance.

- **Research Question 4:** What are the strategies to promote authentic leadership and to improve employee well-being in Nigeria cocoa sector?

Respondent 3 suggested that organisation leaders should develop an intentional framework about being authentic in their management leadership style. Respondent 1 added that cocoa organisations should develop organisational policies that support leadership authenticity. According to respondents 3, the policies should cover practices that enhance employee's overall well-being. Respondent 8 make case for health well-being of employee, especially those who are vulnerable to health hazard. Health insurance policy according to respondent 8 is very low, therefore, respondent 8 specifically solicited for health insurance policy for employees. Respondent 6 advocated for open communication between employers and employees to prove their authenticity. Respondent 7 added that open communication will foster collaborations among employees thereby fostering social connections. Respondent 3 also submitted that organisations should Implement leadership development programs that focus on cultivating authentic leadership qualities. Provide training, workshops, and coaching to leaders within the cocoa sector to enhance self-awareness, emotional intelligence, transparency, and ethical decision-making. These programs can help leaders develop the skills and mindset necessary to lead authentically and create a positive work environment. Respondent 5 further shed light on sustainability practises engage with external certification programs like Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, etc. to promote ethical production, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability in the cocoa industry.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A major finding is that Nigeria cocoa sector employees are cognisant of their well-being and look up to their employees to take responsibilities for their well-being while on the job. Nigeria cocoa sector employees have the ability to recognize and understand their own physical, mental, and emotional well-being and are able to identify factors that may affect it, and possible proactive steps to promote and maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle. For example, respondent 1 said “...my personal well-being means a lot to me...” All the respondents showed that they all recognise their mental and emotional need and according to Zivkovic (2022) such employees need leaders that can show empathy and compassion. Due to the dynamisms of cocoa business such as the challenging work environment, seasonal nature of work, economic and market factors (Buor 2022) developing authentic leadership in the Nigeria cocoa sector is crucial and it requires a collective effort from organisations across the sector. By investing in leadership development, promoting ethical practices, and fostering collaboration, the sector can cultivate a new generation of authentic leaders who will drive positive change, ensure sustainability, and enhance the well-being of all involved in the cocoa value chain.

On Contrasting Leadership Disposition to Employee's Well-Being in Nigeria Cocoa Sector

The respondents of this research revealed varying approaches and practises of employee well-being across Nigeria cocoa organisations. There is also a finding of a **compliance-oriented approach** (Perlman et al. 2023) to employees' well-being in the Nigeria cocoa sector according to this research. These organisations comply with minimum legal requirements but do not proactively go beyond those standards. They may provide basic healthcare benefits and adhere to safety regulations but lack comprehensive well-being programs. Employee engagement may be limited, and initiatives to address work-life balance or mental health support may be absent. Their focus is primarily on meeting legal obligations rather than actively promoting well-being. Respondent 4 explained that his organisation needs to improve in the employee well-being. Respondent 4 further stated that "I believe that I should have a sense of belonging and my opinion about my well-being should be prioritized." There is also a finding that demonstrates an **inconsistent approach** (Boyd and Nowell 2023) to employee well-being. They may have sporadic initiatives or programs focused on employee well-being, but the implementation and sustainability may vary. Respondent 1 and 2 complained of lack of comprehensive support systems or long-term strategies for well-being. This employer's approach is characterized by inconsistency and may not consistently prioritize employee well-being across the organisation.

Employers Focus of Financial Incentives

Financial well-being seems to be prioritised in the Nigeria cocoa sector, though it may not necessarily be the sole or highest priority for all employers. Respondent 9 had stated that "my work-life need to be balance to enjoy my remunerations." Ensuring financial well-being becomes crucial for employees to meet their basic needs, support their families, and sustain their standard of living (Sabri et al. 2020). Employers therefore recognize the importance of providing fair compensation and benefits to support their employees' financial stability.

Organisations with a well define policy that enhances employee well-being are able to attract and retain talents (Werner and Balkin 2021). In a competitive labour market, employers in the cocoa sector recognize that financial well-being is an important factor for attracting and retaining skilled workers. Offering competitive compensation and benefits helps employers attract talented individuals and reduce turnover rates. According to Bella (2023), prioritising financial well-being can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn positively impacts productivity and overall organisational success. Financial incentives also motivate employees in the Nigeria cocoa sector to pursue personal growth and creative ideas to improve the cocoa industry. Respondent 9 mentioned that "my organisation encourages me to further my education and improve my procurement skills." In summary, offering competitive financial incentives, such as performance-based bonuses, profit-sharing, or stock options, can motivate employees to work more efficiently and effectively. Monetary rewards can help align employee goals with the organization's objectives, leading to increased productivity and a greater commitment to the company's success.

Impacts of Cultural Factors on Organisational Culture

The research discovers how cultural factors within Nigeria impact authentic leadership and employee well-being in the cocoa sector. The relationship between organisational culture and authentic leadership is significant and intertwined. The culture of an organisation refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours that shape the work environment and guide employee interactions. Authentic leadership, on the other hand, is a leadership style

characterized by self-awareness, transparency, ethical decision-making, and genuine relationships with followers (Cao et al. 2020; Khan et al. 2020 and Abbass et al. 2023).

Nigerian culture places strong emphasis on family and community values. In the cocoa sector, this translates into a sense of collective responsibility and interconnectedness. Nigerian culture often respects hierarchical structures and values authority. This influence can be seen in organisational cultures in the Nigeria cocoa sector, where hierarchical structures are commonly observed. Decision-making may be centralized, with authority concentrated at the top levels of the organisation. Employees may show deference to superiors and adhere to established protocols and chain of command. Furthermore, respondents 3 and 4 stated that because of the family ties in the organisation hierarchy, the quest to ensure generational succession enhances the promotion of a strong work ethic within the organisation (Nwuke et al. 2020). This has also resulted to implementing recognition programs that acknowledge and reward employees who consistently exhibit a strong work ethic. This can be in the form of verbal appreciation, public recognition, or tangible rewards. Recognizing and appreciating hard work reinforces the value of a strong work ethic.

Sector Specific Challenges

This research work observed some specific challenges as relate to employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa sector. Some cocoa sector employees, do not have access to social protection schemes such as health insurance, pension benefits, or unemployment benefits. Russo and Terraneo (2022) argued that this lack of social safety nets further exacerbates their vulnerability and limits their ability to cope with emergencies or unexpected events. The cocoa sector in Nigeria, like many agricultural sectors, has a significant informal component. Informal employment arrangements are often characterized by a lack of formal contracts and are prevalent due to factors such as traditional practices, and a lack of enforcement of labour laws (Jayaram and Varma 2020). Furthermore, in some cases, employers may exploit the power imbalance between themselves and workers by not providing formal contracts. Kissi and Herzig (2024) argued that this can lead to a lack of job security, reduced bargaining power for workers, and potential exploitation in terms of wages and working conditions. Respondent 2 continued "Sometimes I am afraid of my future because I feel I do not have a sense of belonging".

External Certification and Standards

According to respondent 5 who is the certification and sustainable manager in his organisation, "there is an ongoing engagement with external certification programs and standards that promote responsible and sustainable practices in the cocoa industry. According to Bello-bravo et al. (2022), these certifications, with industry partners such as Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, or UTZ, provide guidelines and requirements for ethical production, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability." Aligning with recognized certifications demonstrates a commitment to responsible leadership and employee well-being.

Respondent 6, a country manager of a multinational cocoa industry in Nigeria added that "though external certifications and standards in the Nigeria cocoa industry prioritise sustainability, environmental preservation, and social responsibility. These standards indirectly impact employee well-being by ensuring equitable labour practices, promoting healthy working environments, and advocating for fair compensation." They also provide training and capacity building programs to enhance employees' skills in sustainable

agricultural techniques, farm management, and occupational health and safety. This leads to increased job satisfaction, proficiency, and overall welfare. Additionally, certifications mandate the adoption of health and safety protocols, such as managing agricultural inputs and implementing secure working procedures. These certifications play a crucial role in improving employee well-being by prioritizing health and safety, minimizing workplace accidents, injuries, and occupational diseases (Cadby and Araki 2021; Martin et al. 2023 and Keller et al. 2022).

Value Chain Dynamism

Nigeria cocoa sector is dynamic especially in its value chain. The Nigerian cocoa supply chain may be traced from farmers to cooperatives societies, licensed purchasing agents (LBAs), and exporters who sell to overseas customers, mostly from the United Kingdom. Nigeria then transitioned from the marketing board's trade system to a liberalized cocoa marketing and trade system, therefore allowing several private investors to participate in the trade (Akanke et al. 2023), allowing for a value chain that can be described as a combination of horizontal and vertical integration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this research examined the impact of authentic leadership on employee well-being in the Nigeria cocoa industry. This research found that leaders who exhibited self-awareness, transparency, and ethical decision-making fostered a supportive work environment, enhancing employee engagement, and overall well-being. This was supported by existing literature and qualitative data analysed from the interviews conducted. Secondly, the study revealed that authentic leadership played a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of work-related stress and other challenges faced by cocoa industry employees. Authentic leaders were able to provide financial, psychological and emotional support, act as role models, and promote a culture of trust and open communication. These factors contributed to improved psychological well-being and resilience among employees.

Based on the findings to this research work and to improve authentic leadership and employee well-being in the cocoa industry in Nigeria, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. Implement leadership development programs that specifically target the cultivation of authentic leadership characteristics among executives in the cocoa business. Provide training and seminars that improve individuals' understanding of themselves, their ability to make ethical decisions, their transparency and integrity, and their sense of empowerment. These programs may assist leaders in cultivating the essential skills and abilities required to establish a favourable work environment and promote employee well-being. It is important for Nigeria cocoa sector leaders to develop true leadership activities that subordinates see as respectful and pleasant. Leaders should focus on fostering motivating behaviours that enable employees to perceive fair and consistent treatment in accordance with ethical and moral principles, with the aim of enhancing inventive work behaviour.
2. Establish Supportive Organisational Policies. This includes regulations pertaining to the equilibrium between work and personal life, adaptable work arrangements, initiatives to support employees, and steps to ensure their health and safety. Organisations may foster a healthier and more favourable work environment in the cocoa sector by giving priority to employee well-being via the implementation of supporting policies. The

cocoa sector's policies on employee well-being, work-life balance, health and safety, and leave entitlements need to be reviewed. A needs assessment can be conducted to understand employees' concerns and suggestions for policy improvements. Best practices are researched and adapted to suit the Nigeria cocoa sector. Employees and stakeholders should be involved in the policy development process. A policy framework can be developed, and policies are communicated, implemented, and continuously evaluated for improvement.

3. **Open communication and feedback.** Foster a culture of open and honest communication across the workplace. The issue of communication has long been an important issue in any organisation; however, it is important that leaders in the cocoa sector promote the practice of engaging in active listening with workers, consistently seeking effective communication and feedback from employees and fostering chances for conversation. This promotes confidence, cooperation, and a feeling of inclusion, which has a favourable effect on the well-being of employees. For example, respondent 9 mentioned that well-being policies and practises is at the discretion of the Managing Director of his organisation, but effective communication is crucial in reducing stigma and aligning well-being practices with organisational values. It fosters trust, loyalty, and a sense of belonging among employees, enhancing their overall well-being. Open and supportive communication creates a safe environment for employees to discuss their concerns and seek help. This should align with the organisation's values, fostering a culture of support and increased engagement. Regular communication about well-being initiatives, progress updates, and recognition further reinforces the importance of employee well-being within the organisation.
4. **Provide Training on Well-being and Stress Management:** Organisations should offer training programs and resources on well-being and stress management for employees in the cocoa industry. Education and skills should be provided to help individuals cope with work-related stress, maintain work-life balance, and build resilience and not just focus on profits alone. This can contribute to improved employee well-being and overall mental and psychological health within the industry. Respondent 1 and 2 said "sometimes they are mentally drain because of work-life imbalance." Therefore, stress management training in cocoa sector will enhances employees' resilience and improves performance and productivity (Jones et al. 2023). It will help them handle challenges with a positive mindset, ensuring they can navigate work demands effectively.
5. **Encourage a culture of empowerment.** Culture of empowerment that values employee contributions, encourages innovation, promotes collaboration, and ultimately drives the growth and success of the industry. Respondent 9 mentioned that "my organisation has a policy of encouraging employees especially procurement officers to learn how to engage in the actual trading, and this developed certain employees to become an entrepreneur." Therefore, subject to a well define working policies and further research, a culture of "Intrapreneurship" could be encouraged as a culture of empowerment. Intrapreneurship refers to the promotion of entrepreneurial mindset and behaviours within an organisation, where employees are encouraged to take ownership, think creatively, and drive innovation (Ravina-Ripoll et al. 2023). This type of empowerment could further foster a culture of risk-taking, thereby encouraging employees to experiment and adapt. Recognize and reward those who take calculated risks. Establish an intrapreneurial support system, including intrapreneurship champions, internal incubators, and to provide guidance, mentorship, and resources for employees.

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Authors Contribution

1. Mr Adekunle Tayo: Introduction Discussion, Implications, Conclusion, and Final Proof
2. Dr Olajide Olabode the analyst of the qualitative data and final proof
3. Dr Kutu Jacob the initiator of the title of the project and final proof

Data Available Statement

Authors agree to make data and materials supporting the results or analyses presented in their paper available upon request from the corresponding author.

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