

A Study of Organizational Cynicism Among Employee Groups in a Multi-Campus Public University in Ghana: Does the Level of Education Matter?

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ABSTRACT

This paper, which is part of a larger study, investigates the relationship between Organizational Cynicism (OC) and the level of education of three employee groups – Teaching Staff (TS), Non-Teaching Staff (NTS), and Senior Staff (SS) – of a multi-campus public University in Northern Ghana. Valid data were collected from 192 employees of the University for Development Studies (UDS) and analysed. A one-way ANOVA and Correlation Analyses were used to respectively determine the cynicism level of the three employee groups; and the relationship between the employees' level of education and their cynical tendencies in the University. The study found a significant relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education; and that the two variables are inversely related. The findings also indicate that the SS group has the highest prevalence of cynicism in the University, followed by the TS, and then the NTS. Some theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Keywords: cynicism; employee groups; level of education; public universities; Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Since the [1] pioneering work on cynicism in the Police Service in the United States of America (USA), research in Organizational Cynicism (OC) has proliferated over the years as a negative work-attitude in organizations. Cynical employees are well noted globally for their negative feelings of contempt, frustrations, disillusion and hopelessness towards their organizations, their leaders and other workplace objects [2], [3]. They believe that their organizations and the leaders lack integrity,

and therefore, express emotional resentment, as well as exhibiting critical behaviours per their believes and emotions [4].

Prior studies ([5]; [6]; [7]; [8]; [9], [10]) have shown that OC has been empirically proven to adversely affect employees' work-attitude such as commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intention, alienation, organizational performance and burnout. Several factors may have influenced the work-attitudes and behaviours of employees in organizations. These factors may include the increasing sophistication in the operations of public organizations, socio-cultural diversities of the workforce, organizational politics and perceived inefficiency and aggrandizement of public organizational leaders. Such sophistication and diversities may have also contributed to the widespread cynicism in organizations globally, and thus, have stimulated interest in OC research for the past three decades. For example, [11], [3], and [12], reported that cynicism is widespread in organizations, and it is predominant among employees in the USA. [13], also reported the increasing trend of cynicism in major European countries. Undoubtedly, in the contemporary work relations, where employers expect more from their employees and provide little in return beyond the job and employability, it is predictable that employees may respond in sense-making ways towards these workplace changes and dynamics. Cynicism is therefore, also used by employees in response to workplace adverse and undesirable circumstances [2], [14].

Across many cultures and professions, the relationship between workers' attitudes and their demographic factors has been studied substantially over the years. This is in recognition of the fact that people's historical experiences, personal make-ups and changing circumstances may be significantly related to their perception of "how the world work" [2], page 58. Again, employees' level of education has become a prerequisite for success in the much complex modern occupational environment. This is especially true in the case of high educational institutions, where the occupational structure is highly professionalized, and employees' level of education has inadvertently become synonymous with competence, and a basis for determining the level of job placement.

Ultimately, employees' work performance and their interpretation of workplace dynamics are greatly influenced by the level of professional education and training [16]. Literature examining the relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education has rather been sparse, culturally and sectorial skewed, and in some cases, used as a control variable [17]. For example, the work of [12], found no significant association between employees' cynicism and their level of education. This is, however, not consistent with the findings of [15] that employees' level of education is a significant indicator of the development of their cynical attitude in the USA. Also, the work of [17], and [6] found a significant association between employees' cynical disposition and their level of education.

Generally, Public Universities (PUs) the world over, are largely bureaucratic, comprising of many different professionals; each with varying roles, competencies, interests and with varying degree of cognitive attainment; but with a common objective of promoting the Universities' interest of delivering quality educational services. As social systems, the dynamics of social interactions among employee groups as well as their academic and professional development at the workplace, have an important influence on their work-attitude, with far-reaching consequences on organizational performance. Given the bureaucracy that characterized their operations, Universities all over the

world, are of no exception of organizations that are prone to activities of cynics and cynicism [12], [18].

Not much has been done in exploring the relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education; especially in the Ghanaian high education context. Prior studies on OC have used employees' level of education as an attribute variable; thus, defining mainly the characteristics of the population in general [5], [8], [9], [19], [20]. An investigation into the relationship between these two variables is, therefore, important. This is particularly critical given the negative effects employees' cynicism has on their work-attitudes and general organizational success [21], [8], [22], [23]. In view of the foregoing, the current study seeks to examine the level of cynical tendencies of three employee groups in the University for Development Studies (UDS). The study also examines the relation between employee-cynicism and their educational levels, by exploring further, changes in employees' cynical dispositions as they acquire more educational experience.

The study, therefore, hypothesized that:

H₁. there are no significant differences in cynical attitude among employee groups at the University.

H₂. there is no significant relationship between employees' cynical attitude and their level of education at the University.

H₃. there is no significant relationship between employees' cynical attitude and their gender in the University.

H₄. there is no significant relationship between employees' cynical attitude and their marital status at the University.

METHOD

Population and Study Setting

The study was conducted in UDS. The University was established in 1992 as a multi-campus public University to serve the then three regions of Northern Ghana in particular. The University has a heterogeneous staff population, with different professionals belonging to different employee groups. The population was therefore structured into three independent sample groups based on TS, NTS, and SS groupings. The TS performs teaching and research-related functions. Whilst the NTS performs the day-to-day administrative and other work-related functions, the SS performs supportive roles to both the TS and NTS groups in the daily operations of UDS [24].

Sampling and Methods of Data Collection

Using the [25]'s formula ($n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$) where 'N' is the total population, and 'e' is the margin of error (0.05), a sample size of 251 was drawn from three Campuses of the University. The sample was proportionately distributed among the three employee groups and the three campuses. Due to difficulty in accessing the sample frame, coupled with the need to avoid skewness, and to ensure the spread of the sample within each group, a quota sampling technique was used to conveniently draw the final respondents from each homogeneous independent group [26]. Out of 251 questionnaires, 144 were administered to the TS group, 28 to NTS and 80 to the SS groups. A total of 192 questionnaires, representing a 76% response rate, were returned valid. The data were then inspected and prepared for analysis.

Measurement Instrument

The study adopted [27] employee cynicism scale. Even though the adopted scale is predominantly used as a multi-dimensional construct [18]. [28], [9], it was used in its generic sense in this study, as used by [17] and [29]. It contains 14 items, and has been validated, and is widely used to measure OC across diverse cultural environment and professions by many researchers globally [5], [17], [6], [8], [30], [31]. The scale was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument was assessed for reliability and internal consistency. The result produced an Alpha Correlation Coefficient of 0.911. An alpha level of 0.70 and above of a given scale is often considered reliable and acceptable in the social sciences [32], [33].

Data Analysis

The data set was subjected to a normality test and a non-significant Shapiro Walk's p -value of 0.14, $p > 0.05$ was recorded. This means that the data satisfied the assumption of normality test and that further informed the use of parametric test techniques in this study. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the variations in cynicism of the three employee groups and the differences in cynical inclination of these employees base on their level of education. Also, the level of employees' cynicism was determined using Mean Scores (M). Pearson Correlation was conducted to indicate whether or not there is a relationship between employees' level of education and their cynical tendencies in the University. All the statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 for windows.

RESULTS

Respondents' Characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	Category	No.	%
Age	26 – 35 years	56	29.2
	36 – 45 years	88	45.8
	46 – 55 years	34	17.7
	56 + years	14	7.3
Gender	Male	136	70.8
	Female	56	29.2
Level of Education	HND/Diploma	16	8.3
	Bachelor or Equivalent	39	20.3
	Masters or Equivalent	106	55.2
	PhD or Equivalent	31	16.2
Marital Status	Married	161	84.0
	Unmarried	31	16.0
Employee Category	Teaching Staff	99	51.6
	Non-Teaching Staff	23	12.0
	Senior Staff	70	36.4
Campus	Wa	48	25.0
	Tamale	100	52.1
	Nyankpala	44	22.9
Work Experience	1– 3 years	24	12.5
	4 – 6 years	54	28.1
	7 – 9 years	52	27.1
	10 + years	62	32.3

The study analysed the characteristics of the respondents and found that majority (70.8%) of them were males and were between the ages of 36 and 45 years (45.8%). All the respondents were educated with most (55.3%) of them holding at least, a master's degree. In terms of marital status, 84.0% of them were married whilst 16% were divorced or unmarried. The TS group forms the majority (51.6%) of the respondents with NTS and the SS groups constituting 36.4% and 32.3% respectively. The greater percentage of the TS in the sample is an indication of the fact that the manifest function of a university is teaching and learning, thus this finding comes as no surprise to the researchers. Out of the 192 respondents, 52.1% were obtained from the Tamale campus. Whilst 22.9% were obtained from the Nyankpala campus, 25% were from the Wa campus. On work experience, most (32.3%) of the respondents have either ten or more than ten years' work experience in the University (Table 1).

Table 2: Differences in the Cynicism Level of the Three Employee Groups

Employee Group	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Teaching Staff	99	3.0545	.50827	.05108	2.9532	3.1559	1.36	4.50
Non-Teaching Staff	23	2.5652	.61025	.12725	2.3013	2.8291	1.57	4.14
Senior Staff	70	3.2669	.59955	.07166	3.1239	3.4098	2.00	4.50
Total	192	3.0733	.59186	.04271	2.9891	3.1576	1.36	4.50

The SS group are more ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.59$) cynical in their disposition, followed by the TS ($M = 3.1$, $SD = .51$). The NTS are less inclined to cynicism with a mean score of 2.6 and a standard deviation of 0.6 (Table 2).

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.595	2	4.298	13.929	.001
Within Groups	58.313	189	.309		
Total	66.908	191			

The ANOVA indicates a statistically significant result $F(2, 189) = 13.929$, $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the differences in cynical attitude of the three employee groups were significant (Table 3). Again, equal variances were assumed for homogeneity test $F(3, 188) = 1.019$, $p = 0.386$ ($p > 0.05$). The ANOVA however produced a non-significant result: $F(3, 188) = 2.183$, $p = 0.09$ ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4: Differences in the Cynicism Level Three Employee Groups Based on Level of Education

Level of Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HND/Diploma or Equivalence	16	3.3365	.72276	.18069	2.9514	3.7217	2.14	4.50
Bachelor or Equivalent	39	3.1850	.47507	.07607	3.0310	3.3390	2.07	4.21
Masters' Degree or Equivalence	106	3.0270	.57736	.05608	2.9158	3.138, 2	1.57	4.43
PhD. or Equivalence	31	2.9555	.66437	.11932	2.7118	3.1992	1.36	4.50
Total	192	3.0733	.59186	.04271	2.9891	3.1576	1.36	4.50

The mean scores of employees' cynicism, according to their level of education were analysed. Whilst employees with a lower level of education have the highest ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.72$) cynical outlook, those with Masters and PhD tend to have lower cynical tendencies

Table: 5 Correlation Matrix

No.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	O.C	1.000							
2	Level of Education	-.179*	1.000						
3	Gender	.036	.246**	1.000					
4	Age	-.009	.216**	-.102	1.000				
5	Marital Status	.090	-.119	.038	.250	1.000			

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($P \leq 0.05$) (2-tailed);

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($P \leq 0.01$) (2-tailed); O.C = Organizational Cynicism

DISCUSSION

The study sought to identify the relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education in UDS. The correlation coefficient (r) between OC and the employees' level of education is 0.179 . The ' r ' is statistically significant ($r = -0.312$, $p < .05$) and indicates an inverse and a weak relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education.

The study also sought to examine the level of cynicism of three employee groups of the University. Findings of the study indicate that among the three-employee groups, there is high ($M=3.3$) prevalence of cynicism among the SS group, followed by the TS ($M= 3.1$) and then the NTS ($M=2.6$) groups. The results also found that differences in the cynical attitude of the three employee groups were significant $F(2, 189) = 13.929$, $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$), hence we reject the H_1 . The finding regarding SS having the highest cynical disposition is consistent with the expectations in a normal organizational setting; in a sense that, generally, the SS group are usually at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, with low remunerations and therefore, may feel disillusioned and frustrated if they perceived that their efforts to improve their qualification to climb higher the job ladder are stifled by policies instituted by the Management of the University. Such negative beliefs, may over time, culminate into an expression of distasteful behaviours towards the University and/or the Management. This supports the view of [34] when they opined that employees who neither command nor climb the job ladder are more likely to develop cynical attitudes towards their organizations. For NTS and TS groups, they are regarded as 'Senior Members' in the staffing pyramid in PUs in Ghana [24]. Such employee groups are more educated, and are placed higher in the organizational chain of command compared to the SS group, and are, therefore, less likely to develop a cynical opinion about their institutions. Thus, it is plausible to infer from the work of [34] and [15] that employees with a high level of education, who are found in higher positions in the organizational structure and, therefore, earn high-incomes are less likely to form cynical attitudes towards their organizations.

Again, employees' cynicism was also assessed in relation to their level of education; and an inverse relationship was found between the two variables. Employees with Diploma recorded the highest ($M = 3.3$) prevalence of cynicism. Employee cynical disposition decreases from $M = 3.3$ to $M = 3.1$ and $M = 2.9$ as their level of education increases from Diploma to Bachelor, and Masters and PhD degrees respectively. This means that OC is higher among employees with low qualification, and

tends to decrease as they climb higher the academic ladder. This is in line with organizational culture in PUs in Ghana, as employees improve in their level of education, they are more likely to shift from lower rank to a higher rank with its associated benefits, and hence will be less likely to perceive their organizations negatively. This is consistent with the finding in relation to the employee groups, as the SS bracket recorded the highest mean score in OC than TS and the NTS who are superior in rank and qualification. Again, these findings lend support to [15] study that found highly educated employees to be less cynical than employees with a lower level of education.

The study also sought to establish whether or not there is a significant association between employees' cynicism and their level of education in UDS. Results of the correlation analysis found a significant relationship between the two variables ($r = -.179, p < .01$) in UDS, hence H_2 is rejected. This means that as employees' level of education increases, their cynicism tendencies decrease, and the vice versa. Though the strength of the relationship is weak, given the magnitude (.179) of the correlation coefficient, a significant relationship nonetheless, was found ($p < .01$). This finding lends credence to an earlier finding of this study, wherein the mean scores of employees' cynicism was seen decreasing as their level of education improves. However, no association was found between OC of employees and their gender and marital status, hence the H_3 , and H_4 were not rejected.

CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

The current study extends our knowledge in the area of personnel management and human resource development in Ghana's PUs context. The study is also one of its kind, which is demonstrated by its ability to explore the relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education in a **multi-campus public university**. Moreover, the findings provide a theoretical footing on the importance of personnel education, training and development by offering empirical evidence on how employees' level of education contributes to the development of their positive work-attitude (or otherwise) in Ghanaian higher educational institutions context.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of the study was to examine the cynicism level of three employee groups in UDS, with particular reference to their level of education. The study found a significant relationship between employees' cynicism and their level of education and that the two variables are inversely related in the University. The study also established that OC is high among the SS group, followed by NTS and the TS groups. Since OC is a negative work-attitude with adverse effects on the organization, Management of Universities and policymakers should institute and implement appropriate policies that will promote employees' academic progression to facilitate the development of positive work-attitude among employees in PUs.

LIMITATIONS

The scope of the current study is limited to three employee groups in three, out of four, campuses of a multi-campus public university in Northern Ghana. In view of this, the generalizability of the findings to all employees in the entire university and to a larger extent, all universities in Ghana, remains in doubt. The researchers also acknowledged the limitation of the positivist approach in studying employees' behaviour in organizations. A post-positivist approach, as well as a wider scope covering all employee groups in both public and private, are therefore suggested for future studies.

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Appendix

Table: Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.253	3	.751	2.183	.091
Within Groups	64.655	188	.344		
Total	66.908	191			