



**EMPLOYEES' TREATMENT AND WORK
ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN
REFORM, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE, PHILIPPINES**

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Abstract:

This study aimed to determine the employees' treatment and its effects on the work engagement of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte during the calendar year 2023. The study is premised on the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between employee treatment and work engagement. Descriptive survey and descriptive-correlational research methods were used in the study. One hundred twenty-one (121) employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte were the respondents of the study. Frequency count and percentage, weighted mean, Kruskal-Wallis H Test, and Mann-Whitney U Test were the statistical tools utilized in the study. The result revealed that the majority of the employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte were females, 31 years old and above, earned at least masteral units, with 6 years and above work

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experience, and are permanent employees. The level of employees' treatment in terms of workers' rights, respect in the workplace, and caring relationships of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte was very high. The level of work engagement in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte was very high. A significant difference in the level of employee treatment when the respondents were grouped in terms of status of employment was detected. However, no significant difference was observed in the level of employee treatment when respondents were grouped in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, and years of service. No significant difference was noted in the level of work engagement when respondents were grouped in terms of their profile. A significant positive low correlation between the levels of employee treatment and work engagement was discovered. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the author recommends that the Department of Agrarian Reform Central, Regional, and Provincial Offices utilize the findings of this study as valuable input for a policy formulation on the reward system of the department to further encourage personnel to maintain and even improve the level of employee treatment and work engagement.

Keywords: employee treatment, work engagement, Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines

1. Introduction

Employee treatment relates to how management treats their employees, which can affect their job happiness or dissatisfaction, as well as their work engagement or disengagement (Raney & Menor, 2023). Work engagement is a form of workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organizational goals and values motivated to contribute to the success of the organization and, at the same time, able to improve the sense of well-being of fellow employees in the organization (Charli *et al.*, 2023).

A local government unit that fosters an inclusive culture in the workplace can boost employee engagement and productivity (Encio *et al.*, 2022). An ideal physical workplace environment is important for providing employees with a positive experience, allowing them to utilize their skills, regulating their behavior, fostering a strong connection to their culture, and ultimately increasing their productivity in the organization (Ramos, 2021). On the other hand, unfair treatment is one of the factors that causes employees to leave the organization and can affect the employees' job satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and work engagement and disengagement (Abun *et al.*, 2020). Employees' disengagement is frequently the result of management's attempt to treat employees unequally (Trammell, 2019). Employees who are treated fairly and consistently in the workplace gain trust, boost morale, deepen loyalty, and increase productivity. Favoritism, on the other hand, breeds hatred and resentment toward favored individuals and employers (Dowd, 2021).

President Marcos enacted the following laws: Republic Act No. 6389, (Code of Agrarian Reform) and RA No. 6390 of 1971 -- Created the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Agrarian Reform Special Account Fund. It strengthened the position of farmers and expanded the scope of agrarian reform. Presidential Decree No. 2, September 26, 1972 -- declared the country under a land reform program. It enjoined all agencies and offices of the government to extend full cooperation and assistance to the DAR (DAR, 2024).

The importance of fair treatment towards individuals in the workplace can have a positive impact on employee engagement at work. Employees try to give their all when they are appreciated, valued, significant, and heard, regardless of who they are or what function they play in the organization. Fair treatment at work begins with high-level leadership rewarding managers for treating individuals fairly and justly when they hire, train, and monitor them (Dowd, 2021). Employee treatment becomes particularly important to organizations that rely more on their employees' creativity and inventive activities because human capital, rather than physical capital, plays a larger role in their success and engagement (Abdulsalam, 2021).

Work engagement correlated to so many studies with different factors. Indeed, findings revealed that there is a significant correlation between employees' treatment and work engagement. This indicates any positive changes in employee treatment can affect work engagement (Abun *et al.*, 2020). Employees' treatment connects with economic success and work engagement. This indicates that employee treatment influences the work engagement. It shows that management should improve employee treatment in order to increase employee work engagement (Hassan, 2013). The demographic profiles appear to be important and worthy of investigation in the context of employees' treatment and work engagement. An investigation of this group is important because demographic profiles have an effect on the employees' treatment and work engagement (Postrado & Matildo, 2023; Mehak & Batcha, 2023; Coetzee, 2015).

2. Literature Review

Concerning employee treatment, the government, through the Department of Labor and Employment, has written laws. that is called the Labor Code of the Philippines. This has prescribed workers' rights, management prerogatives, and a dialogue mechanism between labor and management (Collective Bargaining Agreement) For example, the government recognizes management prerogatives without violating the workers' rights in hiring, firing, promotion, or demotion, laying off, or laying down policies, discipline, working hours, and working structure. Instituting management prerogatives and workers' rights balances the power between labor and capital, or management (Jimenez, n.d).

Employees who are treated fairly and consistently in the workplace gain trust, boost morale, deepen loyalty, and increase productivity. Favoritism, on the other hand, breeds hatred and resentment toward favored individuals and the employer. A

dedication to fair treatment at work improves the company's reputation and aids in the recruitment of top talent. Workplace fairness strategies include clearly communicated expectations of fairness, well-written regulations, a commitment to equal practices, and unbiased, consistent rule enforcement (Dowd, 2021). Employee treatment has a large impact on employee happiness, which is connected to higher long-run stock returns, more positive earnings surprises, and announcement returns (Zhang, Wang, & Kong, 2019). Positive employee treatment has a favorable impact on firms' operational, financial, and employee job performance (Chen, Chen, Hsu, & Podolski, 2016).

Employee treatment is anything and everything that can favorably affect an employee, such as compensation, workload, benefits, job security, employee work engagement and feedback, and a multitude of subjective imperceptible that are not easily measured. Employee treatment has an impact on the company's reputation via a variety of methods. For example, managerial dedication to employee relationships is connected with improved organizational performance (Mao & Weathers, 2019). Employee and leadership trust and respect are also important factors in effective employee treatment. Managers are inclined to break their promises to compensate staff for firm-specific investments, generating yet another moral hazard concern in firms (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2015).

2.1 Workers' Rights

Under the Labor Code of the Philippines, workers' rights include security of tenure, self-organization, collective bargaining, just and humane conditions of work, strike/concerted effort, participation in decision-making, just sharing in the fruits of the production, living wage, labor standards, and Collective Bargaining Agreement rights (Jimenez, n.d). These rights emanated from the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Article XIII on Human Rights and Social Justice (GOVPH, 1987). Implementing the workers' rights established by the Labor Code is regarded as the legal and moral foundation for businesses' treatment of employees. It is the legal and normative rules of employer behavior toward employees that might affect their economic and psychological well-being in the workplace (Hassan, 2013).

2.2 Respect in The Workplace

Respect in the workplace is important and fundamental in our daily lives since it is necessary for human contact and social interactions, as well as for the formation of a moral community. Everyone wants to be respected in their personal and professional lives. When asked what the most important value in their workplace is, respect and how they are treated will be at the top of the list of considerations. Respect can be an attitude, principle, virtue, or attention. It can be demonstrated in forms of admiration, esteem, dignity, and care for another person (Melhem & Al Qudah, 2019). Managers should also be given training in providing adequate justification and explanation for managerial decisions and how to treat employees with respect to the decision-making process.

People in top management also should be approachable and pleasant in their day-to-day interactions (Agarwal, 2014).

Demonstrating dignity and respect for people in the workplace is a critical component of a leader's responsibility in building a culture in which employees feel valued and free to be themselves at work. It not only fosters a healthy workplace that boosts employee engagement, well-being, satisfaction, and retention, but it also benefits the firm. Individuals and teams collaborate more when they are treated with dignity and respect, which leads to increased innovation and productivity (Blog, n.d.).

2.3 Caring Relationship

Caring relationships and generosity among employees were shown to build interpersonal resources that can help employees cope with and even reverse the negative effects of burnout. Compassion from another colleague at work allows employees to view their peers as more humane and their organization as having a more caring relationship. The workplace, which consists primarily of employees expressing care, affection, kindness, and tenderness toward their clients, is the ideal site for fostering compassion among employees (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016).

2.4 Work Engagement

Work engagement means harnessing organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. It means that people are integrated into their work; there is no separation between personal selves and the work. Work engagement as a two-dimensional construct includes attention in terms of time spent thinking about one's role at work and absorption in terms of the intensity of one's focus on a role at work (Abun, Magallanes, Foronda, & Encarnacion, 2020). Work engagement is defined by three traits: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is defined by a high level of energy dedicated to one's work and mental resilience while working—the willingness to put effort into one's task. The dedication was described as having "*a sense of significance, excitement, inspiration, pride, and challenge.*" And absorption was defined as "*being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work, causing time to fly by*" (Baes & Naparota, 2022).

Employee engagement leads to improved performance. Employees with high engagement, for example, outperform those who are not involved and are five times more likely to stay with the firm (Wulansari, Ferinia, & Prasetio, 2016). Several strategies can be used to systematically drive employees to engage in decision-making processes linked to their jobs and organizations. Employees are encouraged to be more engaged and accountable for decisions under this participation method (Priyatno, 2012). Engagement is a novel concept that emphasizes an individual's involvement in a situation because they are satisfied and enthusiastic about their work. Employee engagement is defined as a deep connection to the organization and a love of one's job (Ferinia, Yuniarsi, & Disman, 2016). Leaders who actively engage their people make

demonstrable and beneficial improvements and are more aligned with developing workplace models and practices (Ardichvili, Dag, & Manderscheid, 2016).

2.5 Physical Work Engagement

Higher levels of physical work engagement in an individual employee increase their readiness to devote effort to their work by not becoming quickly tired and developing the tendency to remain resolute in the face of task difficulty or failure, resulting in increased job performance. Employees' physical job involvement might be affected by the workplace environment (Makhanu, Mukanzi, & Nyikuli, 2018). Physical engagement at work can improve job performance, particularly among employees, where the most engaged individuals tend to receive more favorable performance assessments from supervisors. Employee engagement is a commonality among the physical energies that people bring to their jobs (Fluegge-Woolf, 2014).

2.6 Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement is concerned with how employees evaluate the tasks in which they are participating. Employees' cognitive engagement in the workplace stems from their assessment of whether their work is meaningful, physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe, and whether the available resources are sufficient to perform their work. This work domain interpretation is used to assess and determine the overall relevance of a situation and to ignite the intention to interact (Baes & Naparota, 2022). Cognitive engagement is built on the concept of investment; it entails thinking and being willing to put up the work required to comprehend complex concepts and master difficult abilities. It was also mentioned that cognitive engagement demonstrates or typically describes the various ways in which people think deeply about ideas and concepts, the extent and degree to which they build meaning from the knowledge given to them, and how they use automated strategies to accomplish their task (Abun *et al.*, 2020).

2.7 Emotional Work Engagement

Emotional engagement at work requires broadening and investing in employees' emotional resources. Employees invest their resources (Trust and Knowledge) in the organization when they are emotionally invested in their activities or tasks. Affective engagement influences or motivates a variety of employee actions, as well as employee loyalty and retention (Clement & Eketu, 2019). Employees who are emotionally committed to their role tasks and are enthusiastic workers are more attentive and focused on their obligations than less engaged employees. Outside of work, engaged workers engage in social activities and hobbies (Baes & Naparota, 2022).

3. Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Adams' Equity Theory which was first developed in the 1960s by J. Stacy Adams, a workplace and behavioral psychologist, who asserted that employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they received from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others. According to Adams Equity Theory, in order to maximize individuals' rewards, the management of the organizations tends to create systems where resources can be fairly divided amongst members of a group. Inequalities in relationships and treatment will cause those within them to be unhappy to a degree proportional to the amount of inequality. The belief is that people value fair employees' treatment, which causes them to be motivated to maintain fairness in the relationships between their coworkers and the organization. The structure of equity in the workplace is based on the ratio of inputs to outcomes. The contributions an employee makes to the organization are known as inputs.

This research is also anchored on Work Engagement Theory of Kahn. Work engagement denotes the degree to which a person shows self-preference in job tasks to promote connections between self and job, which can increase role performance through cognitive, emotional, and physical self-investment (Kahn, 1990). Based on the Work Engagement theory, this study believes that the Work Engagement theory should be divided into cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement. For example, a person who invests cognitive resources in work (e.g., I ought to work hard) to increase role performance is not necessarily put emotional resources into a job (e.g., I am enthusiastic about work) or physical resources into a job (e.g., I actually work hard) at the same time.

4. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the employees' treatment and its effects on the work engagement of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte during the calendar year 2023.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 gender;
 - 1.2 age;
 - 1.3 educational attainment;
 - 1.4 years in service; and
 - 1.5 status of employment?
- 2) What is the respondents' perceived level of employee' treatment in terms of:
 - 2.1 workers' rights;
 - 2.2 respect in the workplace; and
 - 2.3 caring relationship?
- 3) What is the respondents' perceived level of work engagement in terms of:

3.1 physical;

3.2 cognitive; and

3.3 emotional?

- 4) Is there a significant difference in the respondents' perceived level of employee treatment when analyzed according to profile?
- 5) Is there a significant difference in the respondents' perceived level of work engagement when analyzed according to profile?
- 6) Is there a significant relationship between employees' treatment and the work engagement of the respondents?

5. Research Methodology

The study included both survey and descriptive-correlational research methods. The survey method was employed since the researchers gathered data through a questionnaire on employee treatment and work engagement. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), a survey is a research method used to collect data from a predefined group of respondents to gain information and insights on various topics of interest. On the other hand, correlational research is a non-experimental research method in which a researcher measures variables, understands them, and evaluates the statistical relationship between them with no influence from any other variable (Bhat, 2019). A correlational analysis was performed to determine the significant relationship between employee treatment and work engagement.

5.1 Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of three parts: Part I. Demographic Profile consists of: gender, age, educational attainment, years in service, and status of employment; Part II. Employee Treatment Scale (ETS), adopted from HR (Survey n.d; Business Cultures n.d; & Kivimaki and Elovainio 1999), which consists of thirty (30) items divided into three indicators such as workers' rights, respect in the workplace, and caring relationship in the workplace; Part III. Work Engagement Scale (WES), adopted from (Abun, Magallanes, Foronda, & Encarnacion, 2020), consists of fifteen (15) items divided into three indicators namely; Physical, Cognitive, and Emotional.

5.2 Statistical Treatment of the Data

Presented below are the statistical tools utilized in the treatment and analysis of the data gathered:

- **Frequency Counting and Percent.** They are used to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, years in service, and status of employment.
- **Weighted Mean.** This is used to quantify the respondents' ratings on the employee treatment and work engagement of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform office of Dipolog City.

- **Scoring Procedure.** The five-point Likert-type format was used consisting of response options for each item. The rating scales were as follows:

Employee Treatment

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very High
4	3.41-4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree	Average
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Work Engagement

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very High
4	3.41-4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree	Average
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

- **Standard Deviation.** This is used to determine the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the employee's score, where $SD \leq 3$ is homogenous and $SD > 3$ is heterogeneous (Aiken & Susane, 2001; Refugio, Galleto, & Torres, 2019).
- **Mann-Whitney U Test.** This is used to test the difference in employee treatment and work engagement of employee when respondents are grouped in terms of status of employment.
- **Kruskal-Wallis H-Test.** This is used to examine the disparity in employee treatment and work engagement when respondents are grouped in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, and years in service.
- **Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient.** This is used to determine the correlation between employee treatment and work engagement of employee. The following guide in interpreting the correlation value proposed by Cohen, West, and Aiken (2014) was utilized in this study:

Value	Size	Interpretation
± 0.50 to ± 1.00	Large	High positive/ Negative correlation
± 0.30 to $\pm .49$	Medium	Moderate positive/ Negative correlation
± 0.10 to ± 0.29	Small	Low positive/ Negative correlation
± 0.01 to ± 0.09	Negligible	Slight positive/ Negative correlation
0.0	No correlation	

The data gathered in this study were totaled, processed, and analyzed using the Microsoft Excel Data Analysis ToolPak and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences. As a result, displaying statistical formulas is unnecessary. All statistical tests were performed at the 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Gender, Age, Educational Attainment, Years of Service, and Status of Employment

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	39	32.23
Female	81	66.94
LGBTQ+	1	0.83
Age		
21-30 years old	29	23.96
31-40 years old	23	19.01
41-50 years old	23	19.01
51 years old & above	46	38.02
Educational Attainment		
High School Level/Graduate	2	1.65
College Level/College Graduate	56	46.28
College Graduate w/ Masteral Units	26	21.50
Master's Degree	25	20.66
Master's Degree w/ Doctoral Units	2	1.65
Doctoral Degree	10	8.26
Years of Service		
5 Years & below	54	44.63
6-10 years	10	8.26
11 years & above	57	47.11
Status of Employment		
Permanent	92	76.03
Contract of Service	29	23.97
Total	121	100.00

Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, years of service, and status of employment. The result shows that eighty-one (81) or 66.94% are females, thirty-nine (39) or 32.23% are males, and only one (1) is LGBTQ+. Forty-six (46) or 38.02% are 51 years old and above, twenty-nine (29) or 23.94% are 21-30 years old, twenty-three (23), or 19.01% are 31-40 years old, and another twenty-three (23) or 19.01% are 41-50 years old. Fifty-six (56) or 46.28% are college-level/graduates, twenty-six (26) or 21.50% are college graduates with masteral units, twenty-five (25) or 20.66% are master's degree holders, ten (10), or 8.26% are doctorate graduates, two (2) or 1.65% are master's degree holders with doctoral units, and another two (2) or 1.65% are high school level/graduates. Fifty-seven (57) or 47.11% are 11 years and above in the service, fifty-four (54), or 44.63% are 5 years and below in the service, and ten (10), or 8.26% are 6-10 years in the service. Ninety-two (92) or 76.03% are permanent in the service while twenty-nine (29) or 23.97% are in contract of service. This data means that the majority of the respondents are females, 31 years old and above,

earned at least masteral units, with 6 years and above work experience, and are permanent employees.

The current finding contradicts the Sibiya *et al.* (2014) study, which indicated that male respondents were (63%) and female respondents were (37%), (21.53%) of the respondents were between 36 and 40, and 777 or (34%) a higher percentage of respondents were high school graduate.

6.2 Perceived Level of Employees' Treatment

Table 2: Level of Employees Treatment

Employees' Treatment	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	4.45	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High
B. Respect in the Workplace	4.34	0.42	Strongly Agree	Very High
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	4.21	0.52	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.33	0.42	Strongly Agree	Very High

This finding implies that workers' right is protected and respect and caring relationships are observed. This finding is significant to the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte because Chen *et al.* (2016) stated that positive employee treatment has a favorable impact on firms' operational, financial, and employee job performance. The current finding is also supported by Pascua (2024) who indicated that employees who receive a high level of favorable treatment from their employers feel a greater sense of worth and respect, leading to increased satisfaction and engagement, corroborating the current discovery. It also indicated that employees who experience happiness at work possess a favorable attitude towards their jobs and perceive themselves as achieving success.

6.3 Perceived Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Physical

Table 3: Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Physical

A. Physical	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. No matter how much I work, I still have a high level of energy.	4.40	0.60	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. I have a great deal of stamina for my work.	4.52	0.52	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I have a lot of energy for my work.	4.36	0.48	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I am frequently energized by my work.	4.37	0.52	Strongly Agree	Very High
5. Though my work is physically challenging, I am still excited to do it.	4.45	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.42	0.50	Strongly Agree	Very High

This finding denotes that employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte are "very high" engaged in their respective work assignments in terms of physical. Makhanu *et al.* (2018) stated that higher levels of physical work engagement in an individual employee increase their readiness to devote effort to their work by not

becoming quickly tired and developing the tendency to remain resolute in the face of task difficulty or failure, resulting in increased job performance. In addition, Fluegge-Woolf (2014) asserted that physical engagement at work can improve job performance, particularly among employees, where the most engaged individuals tend to receive more favorable performance assessments from supervisors.

6.4 Perceived Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Cognitive

Table 4: Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Cognitive

B. Cognitive	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. My mind is often full of ideas about my work.	4.40	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. My mind is fully engaged with my work.	4.42	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I have an idea about how to perform my work better.	4.60	0.52	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I search for new ways to improve my knowledge related to my work.	4.55	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
5. My thoughts are fully focused when thinking about my work.	4.45	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.48	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High

This discovery entails that cognitive work engagement is “very high” evident in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte. The present finding is supported by Pascua (2024), who demonstrated that employees show a significant level of work engagement, which is characterized by cognitive employees actively and emotionally participating in their tasks.

6.5 Perceived Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Emotional

Table 5: Level of Work Engagement in Terms of Emotional

C. Emotional	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I feel very delighted about what I am doing whenever I am working.	4.54	0.50	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. I am excited to do my work.	4.45	0.53	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I feel good about the work that I do.	4.46	0.56	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I am always very enthusiastic to perform my work.	4.40	0.59	Strongly Agree	Very High
5. I feel very happy when I carry out my responsibilities at work.	4.54	0.50	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.48	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High

This finding suggests that the employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte are emotionally engaged in their respective work assignments at a “very high” level. This finding is supported by Baes & Naparota (2022) who found out

that employees who are emotionally committed to their role tasks and are enthusiastic workers are more attentive and focused on their obligations than less engaged employees. In addition, Clement & Eketu (2019) stated that affective engagement influences or motivates a variety of employee actions, as well as employee loyalty and retention.

6.6 Perceived Level of Work Engagement

Table 5: Level of Work Engagement

Work Engagement	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
A. Physical	4.42	0.50	Strongly Agree	Very High
B. Cognitive	4.48	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High
C. Emotional	4.48	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	4.46	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High

This finding implies that the employees are “very highly” engaged in their respective work assignments. This finding is supported by Wulansani *et al.* (2016) who revealed that employee engagement leads to improved performance. Employees with high engagement, for example, outperform those who are not involved and are five times more likely to stay with the firm. In addition, Ardichvili (2016) stated that leaders who actively engage their people make demonstrable and beneficial improvements and are more aligned with developing workplace models and practices.

6.7 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Table 6: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	0.15	0.93	Not Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	2.22	0.33	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	2.70	0.26	Not Significant
Overall	2.03	0.36	Not Significant

This finding indicates that how males, females, and LGBTQ+ perceive employee treatment does not significantly differ. This finding further indicates that employees have the same perception of employee treatment regardless of gender. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015) who stated that the employees' treatment did not differ significantly when measured in terms of age. He further stated that age, sex, and years of service do not affect employees' treatment.

6.8 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Age

Table 7: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Age

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	4.82	0.19	Not Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	4.12	0.25	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	3.21	0.36	Not Significant
Overall	2.72	0.44	Not Significant

This finding denotes that how respondents of different age brackets perceive employee treatment does not significantly differ. This finding further denotes that age has no significant effect on the respondents' perception of employee treatment. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015), who stated that the employees' treatment did not differ significantly when measured in terms of age, sex, and years of service. He further stated that age, sex, and years of service do not affect employees' treatment.

6.9 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Table 8: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	0.15	0.93	Not Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	2.22	0.33	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	2.70	0.26	Not Significant
Overall	2.03	0.36	Not Significant

This finding indicates that how males, females, and LGBTQ+ perceive employee treatment does not significantly differ. This finding further indicates that employees have the same perception of employee treatment regardless of gender. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015) who stated that the employees' treatment did not differ significantly when measured in terms of age. He further stated that age, sex, and years of service do not affect employees' treatment.

6.10 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Age

Table 9: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Age

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	4.82	0.19	Not Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	4.12	0.25	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	3.21	0.36	Not Significant
Overall	2.72	0.44	Not Significant

This finding denotes that how respondents of different age brackets perceive employee treatment does not significantly differ. This finding further denotes that age has no significant effect on the respondents' perception of employee treatment. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015), who stated that the employees' treatment did not differ significantly when measured in terms of age, sex, and years of service. He further stated that age, sex, and years of service do not affect employees' treatment.

6.11 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Educational Attainment

Table 10: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents Are Grouped in Terms of Educational Attainment

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	20.66	< 0.01	Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	2.34	0.80	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	2.08	0.84	Not Significant
Overall	5.41	0.37	Not Significant

This finding entails that the respondents have the same perception of employee treatment. This finding further entails that the respondents' perception of employee treatment is not affected by their educational attainment. The current finding contradicts Mehak and Batcha (2023), who stated that fair employees' treatment differs significantly when measured in terms of educational attainment. He further stated that educational attainment has a greater influence on employees' treatment.

6.12 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents are grouped in Terms of Years of Service

Table 11: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Years of Service

Employees' Treatment	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	9.21	0.01	Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	5.30	0.07	Not Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	2.21	0.33	Not Significant
Overall	4.62	0.10	Not Significant

This finding conveys that how respondents of different numbers of years of service perceive employee treatment does not significantly differ. This finding further conveys that the respondents have the same perception of employee treatment. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015), who stated that the employees' treatment did not differ significantly when measured in terms of age, sex, and years of service. He further stated that age, sex, and years of service do not affect employees' treatment.

6.13 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents are grouped in Terms of Status of Employment

Table 12: Level of Employee Treatment When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Status of Employment

Employees' Treatment	U-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Workers' Right	555.00	< 0.01	Significant
B. Respect in the Workplace	897.50	< 0.01	Significant
C. Caring Relationship in the Workplace	974.50	0.02	Significant
Overall	745.00	< 0.01	Significant

This finding suggests that how permanent and contract-of-service employees perceive employee treatment significantly differs. This finding further suggests that the status of employment significantly influences the perception of the respondents of employee treatment. The finding is supported by Coetzee (2015), who stated that the employees' treatment differs significantly when measured in terms of employment status.

6.14 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Table 13: Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Gender

Work Engagement	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Physical	1.01	0.60	Not Significant
B. Cognitive	2.53	0.28	Not Significant
C. Emotional	0.44	0.80	Not Significant
Overall	0.05	0.98	Not Significant

This finding means that the respondents have the same perception of work engagement. This finding further means that gender has no significant effect on the respondents' perception of work engagement. The current finding is supported by Baes *et al.* (2022), who stated that there is no significant difference in the perceived level of work engagement when respondents are grouped in terms of sex.

6.15 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Age

Table 14: Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Age

Work Engagement	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Physical	8.15	0.043	Not Significant
B. Cognitive	7.72	0.052	Not Significant
C. Emotional	3.90	0.273	Not Significant
Overall	7.40	0.060	Not Significant

6.16 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Educational Attainment

Table 15: Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Educational Attainment

Work Engagement	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Physical	6.64	0.25	Not Significant
B. Cognitive	4.64	0.44	Not Significant
C. Emotional	10.20	0.07	Not Significant
Overall	9.28	0.10	Not Significant

This finding indicates that how respondents of different educational attainment perceive work engagement does not significantly differ. This finding further indicates that educational attainment has no significant effect on the respondents' perception of work engagement. The current finding contradicts the Baes *et al.* (2022) study, which stated that there is a significant difference in the perceived level of work engagement when respondents are grouped in terms of educational attainment.

6.17 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Years of Service

Table 16: Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Years of Service

Work Engagement	H-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Physical	0.96	0.62	Not Significant
B. Cognitive	5.50	0.06	Not Significant
C. Emotional	1.62	0.45	Not Significant
Overall	0.92	0.63	Not Significant

This finding further denotes that the number of years of service does not significantly affect the perception of the respondents of work engagement. The current finding is supported by Baes *et al.* (2022), who stated that there is no significant difference in the perceived level of work engagement when respondents are grouped in terms of years in service.

6.18 Test of Difference in the Perceived Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Status of Employment

Table 17: Level of Work Engagement When Respondents are Grouped in Terms of Status of Employment

Work Engagement	U-Value	p-value	Interpretation
A. Physical	1227.50	0.49	Not Significant
B. Cognitive	1027.50	0.05	Significant
C. Emotional	1064.00	0.08	Not Significant
Overall	1327.50	0.97	Not Significant

This finding further entails that the status of employment has no significant effect on the respondents' perception of work engagement. The current finding is supported by Heniel and Naparota (2021) who stated that there is no significant difference in the perceived level of work engagement when respondents are grouped in terms of type of employment.

6.19 Test of Relationship Between the Employee Treatment and Work Engagement

Table 18: Relationship Between the Employee Treatment and Work Engagement

Employee Treatment	rho-value p-value	Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Overall
Worker's Right	rho-value	0.18*	0.16	0.09	0.19*
	p-value	0.05	0.07	0.32	0.04
Respect in the Workplace	rho-value	0.14	0.14	0.23*	0.24*
	p-value	0.13	0.14	0.01	0.01
Caring Relationship in the Workplace	rho-value	0.15	0.21*	0.20*	0.22*
	p-value	0.10	0.02	0.03	0.01
Overall	rho-value	0.14	0.27*	0.19*	0.26*
	p-value	0.12	< 0.01	0.04	< 0.01

*significant at 0.05 level.

This finding signifies that employee treatment significantly affected work engagement. This finding further signifies that work engagement is dependent on employee treatment. This finding is supported by Abun *et al.* (2020) who revealed that there is a significant correlation between employees' treatment and work engagement. In addition, Hassan (2023) averred that management should improve employee treatment to increase employee work engagement. Ranay & Menor (2023) also found that there is a correlation between employee treatment and work engagement.

7. Conclusion

This study shows that the level of employees' treatment in terms of workers' rights, respect in the workplace, and caring relationships of the Department of Agrarian Reform Office, Zamboanga del Norte was very high. The level of work engagement in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional of the Department of Agrarian Reform Office, Zamboanga del Norte was very high. A significant difference in the level of employee treatment when the respondents were grouped in terms of status of employment was detected. However, no significant difference was observed in the level of employee treatment when respondents were grouped in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, and years of service.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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