

EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF ORGANISATIONAL AWARENESS AND EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SDG TARGETS ON DECENT WORK IN AKWA IBOM STATE

Philomena Effiong Umoren, PhD

Article Info

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goal 8, decent work, organisational awareness, employee perceptions, Akwa Ibom State, SDG implementation.

DOI

10.5281/zenodo.17175121

Abstract

This study investigates the awareness, efforts, and perceptions of organisations in Akwa Ibom State regarding SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. This study was anchored on stakeholder theory. The research employed a survey design targeting 193 academic staff members from Akwa Ibom State University. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and 113 usable responses were analysed. Findings indicate that while there is general awareness of the United Nations SDGs, the specific awareness of SDG 8 is moderate, with only 57% of respondents recognising it within organisational planning. Organisations demonstrate some effort in promoting fair recruitment, employee safety and training, but discrepancies exist between organisational claims and employee perceptions, particularly concerning transparency in wages and participation in SDG-related planning. Employees largely support SDG-focused training, inclusive dialogue, and internal audits to enhance organisational alignment with SDG 8. The study concludes that while organisational commitment to decent work exists, operationalisation and transparency require improvement. Recommendations include targeted awareness programmes, institutionalisation of fair labour practices, enhanced transparency, participatory SDG implementation, and robust feedback mechanisms to bridge perception gaps and strengthen organisational contributions to global development targets.

Introduction

Global focus has changed in the rapidly changing workplace to ensure that employment practices respect human dignity, safety, and equality, in addition to promoting economic progress. The demand for decent employment, which includes social support for families, job security, and a fair wage, is becoming increasingly strident in both

Department of Mass Communication, Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden

E-mail: philoumoren12@gmail.com

developed and developing countries (ILO, 2023). Nigeria is included in this global discussion due to its active and varied labour market. This is especially true for SDG 8, which focuses on “Decent Work and Economic Growth” (United Nations, 2023). A crucial element at the centre of this investigation is how employees perceive their companies’ awareness of and aggressive attempts to accomplish these objectives (Zeb-Obipi & Kpurunee, 2023).

The United Nations created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which are 17 (17) interconnected global objectives meant to serve as a guide for everyone to achieve a better and more sustainable future by 2030. These objectives address a wide variety of social, economic, and environmental issues, such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, and peace and justice (United Nations, 2015; Sachs, 2015). The three main goals of SDG 8 are the development of full and productive employment, decent work for all, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Governments, civil society, and the commercial sector are expected to share responsibility for implementing the SDGs; therefore, organisational engagement is essential (ILO, 2023).

According to the ILO (2023), decent work includes opportunities for productive employment that yields a fair wage, social protection, workplace security, and the freedom to voice concerns and take part in life-altering decisions. In addition to being a basic human right, this concept is also essential to sustainable development. Decent employment promotes economic growth while guaranteeing that employees are neither mistreated nor exposed to hazardous working circumstances. It is crucial for reaching SDG 8 and is a crucial indicator of social progress.

One of the crucial factors that can necessitate the actualisation of decent work is organisational awareness of this goal. According to Wilson (2019), organisational awareness is the degree to which an organisation comprehends and reacts to internal and external environmental elements, including global objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals. It entails understanding the ramifications of sustainable development and incorporating its tenets into organisational procedures and policies. Implementing SDGs might involve lowering workplace inequality, improving employee well-being, guaranteeing fair compensation, and implementing ethical labour practices. Compliance with labour laws and regulations, employee engagement programmes, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are some ways that these efforts may be seen.

The effectiveness of organisational activities, especially those targeted at reaching SDG objectives, is greatly influenced by employees’ attitudes. According to Ahmed and Shafiq (2021), employee perception is the way in which employees comprehend and interpret the goals, pledges, and actions with reference to sustainable practices. Workers are more likely to be loyal, motivated, and productive when they believe their employers are sincere about decent work and sustainable development (Uford, 2017; Duh & Uford, 2019). On the other hand, a misalignment between organisational rhetoric and behaviour might result in scepticism and disengagement. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend these attitudes to effectively communicate and execute sustainability initiatives.

An increasing amount of research emphasises how decent employment, SDG implementation, and employee perception are intertwined. Companies that actively incorporate SDG concepts into their operations, for example, typically have happier and more committed employees, according to Uddin et al. (2022). According to Eneh and Onyeizugbe’s (2020) research, although there was a comparatively high level of knowledge on SDG 8, institutional and budgetary limitations hindered real implementation. Additionally, researchers like Adegbite et al. (2021) have highlighted how crucial employee perception is in converting business sustainability objectives into observable results. Together, these studies show that organisational knowledge and efforts are important, but not enough; perception-shaped employee buy-in is just as important for achieving decent work objectives.

Even with the increased focus on attaining SDG 8, little is known about how workers in state settings, such as Akwa Ibom State, see their organisation's dedication to these objectives. Prior studies have frequently ignored localised dynamics that may provide more profound insights into the actual reality of SDG implementation in favour of more general national or regional analysis (Okafor & Onyema, 2021). Additionally, although organisational rules may appear to be in line with SDG frameworks on paper, little is known about how these policies actually affect employee behaviour. By investigating how workers in Akwa Ibom State University perceive management's knowledge of and efforts towards meeting decent work objectives, this study aims to close this gap. By doing this, it hopes to further the conversation on sustainable labour practices and provide guidance for managerial and policy decisions that better meet local and international norms.

Problem Statement

Despite international commitments to advance decent work under Sustainable Development Goal 8, many workers in developing nations still endure poor work conditions, unstable employment, little social safeguards, and low pay. These issues are made worse in Nigeria, especially in Akwa Ibom State, by the country's unstable economy, high unemployment rate, and lax institutional enforcement of labour laws. There is still a significant gap between the creation of policies and their actual organisational execution, even as organisations are being asked to more closely align with GDGs. Since workers are the main recipients of decent work programmes, this disparity is frequently most noticeable in their views and actual experiences. In addition to undermining economic growth, a lack of an adequate job lowers employee morale, productivity, and general well-being.

To address these issues, a number of academics have investigated how corporate social responsibility (CSR), organisational policies, and leadership dedication might help achieve the SDGs, especially SDG 8. To achieve decent employment, research has emphasised the significance of institutional capacity building, ethical labour practices, and stakeholder involvement. However, there is a knowledge vacuum on how these national and international initiatives transfer into organisational behaviour at the micro level, as a large portion of the research to date has concentrated on macro-level studies, such as national policy frameworks and international development plans. More crucially, few studies have examined how workers themselves see these organisational initiatives, particularly in local contexts like Akwa Ibom where labour dynamics and economic structures diverge greatly from the national norm.

Therefore, it is imperative that, in the framework of sustainable growth, the gap between organisational awareness and employee experience be closed. As economic constraints increase and workers in Akwa Ibom become more conscious of their rights, evaluating whether organisational efforts are meeting employee expectations and international standards is more crucial than ever. This study is both urgent and essential to identify hidden obstacles to the implementation of decent work and provide useful information for employers, legislators, and development professionals. In light of this, the following question arises: How much do Akwa Ibom University staff believe their management team members are aware of and actively pursue the SDG objectives on decent work?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Assess the level of organisational awareness of SDG 8 on decent work among organisations in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Examine the specific efforts made by organisations in Akwa Ibom to achieve SDG targets related to decent work.
3. Investigate employees' perceptions of their organisations' commitment to and implementation of DWIs.

Literature Review

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Consisting of 17 interconnected goals, the SDGs address critical global issues ranging from climate change to education and gender equality. SDG 8 focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. It underscores the role of economic policies that improve living standards and empower individuals, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (United Nations, 2015).

In developing economies, such as Nigeria, the SDGs provide a strategic framework for addressing systemic challenges in governance, labour practices, and poverty alleviation. Governments, civil society, and the private sector are encouraged to align their policies and operations with these goals. However, the level of SDG awareness and implementation across different sectors and organisational levels varies significantly. Studies show that while policymakers and corporate leaders are increasingly aware of the SDGs, this awareness does not always translate into comprehensive action plans or measurable outcomes (Akanbi & Alabi, 2022).

Recent research highlights the critical importance of localising the SDGs to ensure their effectiveness. Local institutions, including private organisations, are expected to play a proactive role in embedding sustainability principles into their structures and practices (Eze & Osuji, 2021). This requires a deep understanding of the goals and the capacity to translate them into workplace policies and behaviours. Therefore, the challenge lies not only in setting goals but also in building organisational and employee capacities to contribute meaningfully to these objectives. SDG 8, which involves labour market reforms, requires deliberate strategies tailored to the local economic and social context.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on decent work requires organisational awareness of broader national development priorities. Umoren and Udonquak (2021) emphasise that addressing rural development challenges is critical to fostering inclusive growth, which directly supports progress towards SDG targets.

Decent Work

Decent work, as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), refers to work opportunities that are productive, deliver a fair income, ensure workplace security and social protection, and provide prospects for personal development and social integration (ILO, 2020). It also encompasses respect for labour rights, freedom to express workplace concerns, and equal opportunities for all genders and demographics. Decent work is not only a goal in itself but also a key driver of sustainable development and social inclusion. In practice, decent work promotes human dignity and reduces workers' vulnerability, especially in low-income regions.

Despite its central importance, the realisation of decent work remains elusive in many parts of Nigeria. The informal sector dominates the Nigerian labour market, and many workers are exposed to poor working conditions, low wages, lack of job security, and inadequate legal protections (Obisi & Nwachukwu, 2022). Although Akwa Ibom State has economic potential driven by natural resources and infrastructure, challenges such as underemployment, unsafe work environments, and limited social security persist. These issues highlight the need for more focused efforts from employers to ensure fair labour practices and compliance with national and international labour standards.

Recent studies emphasise that achieving decent work requires a multidimensional approach that includes strong institutional frameworks, effective labour regulations, and corporate accountability (Nnadi & Okonkwo, 2023). Employers must not only comply with legal standards but also foster inclusive workplace cultures that support employee well-being and empowerment. Employee participation in decision-making and access to continuous professional development are considered vital for advancing the principles of decent work (Etim & Uford, 2019).

Organisations that prioritise these elements are more likely to attract and retain talent while contributing positively to the broader development agenda.

Organisational Awareness and Efforts to Improve

Organisational awareness refers to an institution's capacity to perceive, interpret, and respond to changes in its internal and external environments, including global movements such as the Sustainable Development Goals. This awareness is demonstrated through leadership commitment, policy formulation, and the allocation of resources towards relevant goals. For SDGs to be effectively implemented in the workplace, organisations must be aware of the goals and intentional in aligning their operational strategies with them. This includes integrating SDG principles into corporate governance, human resource practices, and PMSs (Okorie & Adebayo, 2022).

Efforts towards achieving SDG 8 in organisations often manifest in initiatives aimed at improving working conditions, supporting WLB, reducing inequality and promoting diversity. For instance, companies may introduce employee wellness programmes, training opportunities, or safety protocols to enhance job quality. However, in many cases, especially in SMEs, these efforts are either minimal or symbolic, primarily due to resource constraints and lack of institutional support. Moreover, even well-meaning policies may fail to yield the intended outcomes without effective monitoring and employee feedback mechanisms (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2021).

Strengthening organisational communication practices enhances overall awareness and stakeholder engagement, which is essential for achieving SDG targets on decent work. Umoren (2025) highlighted that effective communication strategies can significantly influence perceptions and trust, which are critical for sustainable organisational development. The alignment between organisational rhetoric and actual practice remains a key challenge. Many organisations publicly endorse sustainability initiatives without embedding them in their core operations. This has led to what scholars have termed "SDG washing," where organisations appear compliant on paper but lack substantial action on the ground. Research shows that organisations with a high level of internal awareness and clear sustainability goals are more likely to make meaningful contributions to the SDGs (Afolabi, 2023). As such, assessing not just what organisations claim to do but also how employees perceive and experience these claims in their daily work lives becomes crucial.

Effective organisational communication plays a crucial role in shaping employee perceptions and enhancing workplace performance, which is vital in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on decent work. Akarika, Umoren, and Okon (2021) note that a positive communication climate significantly influences job performance and overall organisational effectiveness.

A Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical studies exploring the intersection of organisational behaviour and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 on decent work, have provided useful insights into how businesses and employees engage with sustainability practices. Olaniyi and Osabuohien (2021) investigated corporate alignment with SDG 8 among selected manufacturing firms in Lagos, Nigeria. The researchers found that while many firms had formal policies promoting decent work, a significant gap existed between these policies and actual practices. Employees reported persistent issues such as poor job security, lack of career development opportunities, and low wages, indicating a disconnection between organisational claims and lived experiences.

Similarly, Musa and Uduak (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study in Akwa Ibom State and examined the awareness of SDGs among public sector employees. The findings revealed that awareness levels were generally low, particularly regarding SDG 8. Most respondents were unaware of the concept of decent work or how their roles contributed to sustainable development. The study attributed this to a lack of awareness campaigns and inadequate training. The authors argued that enhancing employee knowledge and understanding of SDG 8 would significantly improve their motivation and willingness to support organisational efforts in achieving these goals.

Adepoju and Salami (2021) conducted a comparative study on employee perceptions of decent work in multinational versus indigenous companies in Nigeria. Employees in multinational firms had a more positive perception of their working conditions, citing better wages, health benefits, and workplace safety. Workers in local firms expressed dissatisfaction with their job environments, often citing job insecurity and limited professional growth. Eze and Okonkwo (2020) evaluated how organisational culture influences employees' perception of sustainability practices in southeastern Nigeria. They discovered that a strong organisational culture rooted in transparency and employee involvement led to more favourable perceptions of management's commitment to decent work. The study highlighted the importance of internal communication and PDM as tools to enhance employee trust in organisational sustainability efforts.

An international perspective is offered by Kim and Park (2021), who conducted a study on employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its alignment with SDG 8 in South Korea. The research found that when employees believed their organisations were genuinely committed to decent work, their levels of job satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity increased. The study also indicated that leadership's visible and consistent action helped reinforce employee trust. Although the context is different, the findings are relevant for Nigerian organisations aiming to build employee confidence in their SDG-related programmes.

A study by Nwosu and Etim (2023) explored organisational strategies for achieving decent work in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Uyo, Akwa Ibom. Using interviews and focus group discussions, the study revealed that many SMEs lacked formal structures to implement decent work policies. However, some firms demonstrated commitment through flexible work schedules and inclusive hiring practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on stakeholder theory. This theory provides a comprehensive lens through which the relationship between OAS, efforts towards achieving SDG 8, and employee perceptions can be examined.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, originally developed by Freeman (1984), posits that organisations have a responsibility not only to shareholders but also to a broader group of stakeholders—including employees, customers, suppliers and the community. According to this theory, an organisation's success and sustainability are closely linked to its ability to meet the expectations and interests of its various stakeholders. In the context of this study, employees are critical internal stakeholders whose views and experiences provide insight into the organisation's sincerity and effectiveness in promoting decent work.

When organisations claim alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 8, they must demonstrate meaningful engagement with employees by ensuring fair wages, job security, safe working environments and opportunities for personal growth. Failure to do so may result in reputational damage, low employee morale, and reduced productivity. Thus, the Stakeholder Theory supports the idea that organisational awareness and action regarding decent work must be evaluated from the employees' perspective to determine the extent to which stakeholder needs are being met.

This theory is particularly relevant in local settings such as Akwa Ibom, where organisations often operate in complex environments marked by socio-economic challenges. It provides a normative basis for assessing organisations' ethical and strategic imperatives in contributing to global development targets while addressing local labour concerns.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design involving a population of 388 pensionable academic staff at Akwa Ibom State University, as reported by Usoro and Edeminam (2023). Using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Sample Size Calculator, a sample size of 193 was determined based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin

of error. To ensure fairness and eliminate bias in the selection process, we selected the lecturers from the Obio Akpa Campus through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding the following coefficients: 0.882, 0.572, 0.857, and 0.904 for information adequacy, information feedback, information flow, and 0.904 for organisational commitment. These values indicate acceptable to high internal consistency, except for information feedback, which reflects moderate reliability and may require refinement in future applications.

Analysis and presentation of data

Of the 193 questionnaires administered, 125 were returned over a period of 2 weeks. After data screening, 12 questionnaires were excluded because of incompleteness or inconsistent responses, resulting in 113 usable responses. This yielded a usable response rate of 58.5%, which is acceptable for the statistical techniques applied in this study. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and were encouraged to respond honestly. Adequate time was provided to complete the questionnaire, and ethical considerations including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent were strictly observed.

Table 1: Organisational Awareness of SDG 8 among respondents

| Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| My organisation is aware of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. | 60 | 70 | 30 | 20 | 13 | 193 |
| My organisation specifically recognises SDG 8 on the importance of decent work. | 45 | 65 | 40 | 25 | 18 | 193 |
| Awareness of SDG 8 influences organisational planning. | 38 | 69 | 35 | 28 | 23 | 193 |

Source: 2025 fieldwork

Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their organisations are generally aware of the SDGs. However, fewer respondents indicated a strong awareness of SDG 8, with approximately 110 respondents (57%) agreeing or strongly agreeing. This highlights moderate organisational awareness, with the potential for deeper integration into operational strategies.

Table 2: Organisational Efforts Towards Achieving Decent Work

| Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| The organisation implements fair recruitment and employment practices. | 59 | 74 | 25 | 20 | 15 | 193 |
| Employee well-being and safety are prioritised. | 66 | 58 | 29 | 25 | 15 | 193 |
| My organisation invests in continuous employee training. | 50 | 70 | 32 | 26 | 15 | 193 |

Source: 2025 fieldwork

Table 2 shows that a significant number of respondents agree that their organisations make notable efforts in areas such as fair employment practices, employee safety, and training. A total of 133 respondents (69%) believe in the presence of fair recruitment, while 124 (64%) believe that employee well-being is prioritised. This indicates considerable progress in the implementation of decent work principles.

Table 3: Employees' Perceptions of Organisational Commitment to Decent Work

| Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| The organisation is committed to promoting decent work. | 52 | 66 | 38 | 22 | 15 | 193 |
| My rights as an employee are respected and upheld. | 48 | 72 | 35 | 25 | 13 | 193 |
| Transparency in wages and career progression | 40 | 55 | 45 | 30 | 23 | 193 |

Source: 2025 fieldwork

Table 3 shows that although most respondents perceive their organisations as committed to decent work, a notable proportion either remained neutral or disagreed. While 118 respondents (61%) affirm organisational commitment, only 95 (49%) perceive transparency in wages and career growth. This implies a discrepancy in the perception of decent work.

Table 4: Perceived Gaps in the Implementation of Decent Work

| Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| A mismatch exists between policy and practice in decent work efforts. | 55 | 68 | 34 | 20 | 16 | 193 |
| Employees are not fully involved in SDG-related organisational planning. | 60 | 66 | 30 | 25 | 12 | 193 |
| Management overstates progress on decent work initiatives. | 48 | 62 | 40 | 28 | 15 | 193 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 5 highlights a noticeable perception gap, with 123 respondents (64%) agreeing that there is a mismatch between what organisations claim and what is experienced. Furthermore, 126 respondents (65%) believe that employees are excluded from strategic planning. This underscores the need for improved transparency and inclusion in decision-making processes related to decent work.

Table 5: Recommendations for Enhancing the Realisation of SDG 8

| Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Organisations should train employees on SDG 8 and decent work policies. | 82 | 73 | 20 | 10 | 8 | 193 |
| Inclusive dialogue between employees and management should be promoted. | 74 | 79 | 18 | 15 | 7 | 193 |
| Regular internal audits should be conducted to monitor compliance with decent work goals. | 65 | 76 | 30 | 12 | 10 | 193 |

Source: 2025 fieldwork

Table 5 reveals an overwhelming support for the implementation of specific strategies to improve organisational alignment with SDG 8. A combined 155 respondents (80%) support SDG training, and 153 (79%) favor inclusive dialogue. These results point to practical recommendations that can guide policy enhancement and strategic planning for achieving decent work environments.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness among organisations in Akwa Ibom State regarding SDG 8 on decent work?

The findings indicate that while there is a general awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals among organisations in Akwa Ibom State, specific awareness of SDG 8 on decent work is moderate. Of the 193 respondents, only 57% agreed or strongly agreed that their organisations recognise SDG 8. Although sustainability rhetoric is present, its operationalisation in terms of decent work remains limited.

These results are consistent with those of previous studies. For instance, Obialo and Udoh (2022) found that many Nigerian institutions are aware of the SDGs but lack detailed knowledge of specific goals, such as SDG 8. Similarly, Mbah and Eze (2021) noted that general awareness does not necessarily translate into organisational strategy or behaviour. From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, which postulates that awareness is the first stage in the adoption process. The moderate awareness levels observed here highlight that many organisations may still be in the early stages of engagement with SDG 8, necessitating targeted sensitisation campaigns and policy integration.

Research Question 2: What efforts are these organisations making to achieve the targets of decent work under SDG 8?

The study revealed that organisations are making efforts to achieve SDG 8, especially in areas such as fair recruitment, employee well-being, and continuous training. A majority of respondents (69%) affirmed fair employment practices, and 64% indicated that employee safety is a priority.

These results reinforce the work of Nwachukwu and Iheriohanma (2020), who observed that several private and public sector institutions in South-South Nigeria have introduced employee development and safety programmes in response to global labour trends. However, these efforts often fall short of being comprehensive or fully aligned with the SDG indicators. In the context of stakeholder theory, these efforts reflect attempts by organisations to meet the expectations of internal stakeholders, particularly employees. However, without standardised metrics or accountability mechanisms, measuring the real impact of these initiatives remains difficult.

Research Question 3: How do employees perceive their organisations' awareness and commitment to DWI?

Although most employees perceive some level of commitment to decent work, scepticism exists, especially regarding transparency in wages and career progression. While 61% confirmed their organisation's commitment to decent work, only 49% perceived transparency in wage systems. This highlights a dissonance between organisational declarations and employee experiences, echoing the findings of Adebayo and Ajayi (2021), who reported similar discrepancies in Lagos-based firms. They concluded that visible initiatives are often used for branding, whereas deeper systemic issues remain unaddressed.

This finding also supports the OHT, which emphasises employees' perception of fairness and transparency. If employees feel that decisions around compensation or promotion are opaque, regardless of surface-level initiatives, their perception of organisational commitment will inevitably decline.

Research Question 4: Are there discrepancies between what organisations claim to do and what employees perceive regarding DWPs?

Significant gaps between organisational claims and employee perceptions were identified. Approximately 64% of respondents agreed that a mismatch exists between policies and actual practices. Furthermore, 65% indicated

that employees are not fully involved in SDG-related planning, and 57% believed that management exaggerates progress on SDG 8. This aligns with the findings of Ojo and Musa (2022), who discovered similar perception gaps in NGOs in the Niger Delta. These discrepancies can create mistrust and reduce employee engagement, making it harder for organisations to achieve long-term development goals. The results also validate the social exchange theory, which posits that trust and reciprocity between employees and employers are essential for sustaining organisational commitment. If employees feel misled or excluded, their willingness to contribute diminishes.

Research question 5: What strategies can be recommended to enhance the effectiveness of organisational efforts in promoting decent work in line with the SDG 8?

There is a strong support for actionable strategies. Approximately 80% of respondents supported employee training on SDG 8, 79% endorsed inclusive dialogue, and 73% recommended regular internal audits. These findings highlight that employees are not only aware of the challenges but are also ready to participate in solutions. These recommendations echo the highlightions of Adegbite and Ogunyomi (2023), who emphasized the importance of embedding SDGs in internal policy training and collaborative decision-making processes. Additionally, they align with the institutional theory, which highlights hat for organisations to adapt to global norms like the SDGs, they must institutionalise relevant practices within their operational routines.

Conclusion of the Discussion

Overall, this study highlights a moderate level of awareness of SDG 8, some evidence of commitment and effort, and noticeable perception gaps between management declarations and employee experiences. Previous research and theoretical models have validated these findings, demonstrating that awareness alone is insufficient without transparency, employee inclusion, and systemic implementation. Closing these gaps is essential for improving workplace standards and meaningfully contributing to global development targets.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Organisations in Akwa Ibom State should conduct regular awareness and sensitisation workshops specifically focused on SDG 8. These sessions should be tailored for management and staff to enhance understanding of how SDG 8 applies to workplace policies and practices, ensuring that it is embedded into organisational culture and strategic planning.
2. Organisations should examine the specific efforts made by them to achieve SDG targets related to decent work.
3. Employers should institutionalise fair labour practices by integrating decent work indicators—such as job security, workplace safety, and equitable recruitment—into human resource policies and performance evaluation frameworks. This would ensure consistent and measurable efforts towards achieving SDG 8.
4. Management should improve transparency in organisational processes, especially in areas such as remuneration, promotions, and employee rights. Clear communication and accessible policies will enhance employee trust and perception of genuine commitment to DWE.
5. Organisations should establish feedback mechanisms, such as anonymous surveys or highlightion systems, that allow employees to report discrepancies between stated policies and actual practices. Also, there should be action plans to address reported issues and reduce gaps in perception.
6. Organisations should adopt a participatory approach to SDG implementation by involving employees in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of decent work policies. This includes forming SDG task forces or committees within organisations to promote inclusive dialogue and foster ownership of sustainability goals.

References

- Adegbite, S., Olalekan, A., & Omotayo, A. (2021). Corporate Sustainability Practices and Employee Commitment in Nigerian organisations. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Policy*, 10(2), 45-57.
- Afolabi, O. (2023). Organisational responsiveness to sustainable development goals: Internal alignment and performance assessment *Journal of Corporate Sustainability*, 12(1), 25-38.
- Ahmed, M., & Shafiq, M. (2021). Employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility and their impact on organisational commitment: Evidence from Pakistan *Sustainability*, 13(3), 1443. doi: 10.3390/su13031443
- Akanbi, S. O., & Alabi, J. O. (2022). Awareness and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the private sector of Nigeria *Nigerian Journal of Development Studies* 18(2): 45-59.
- Akarika, D. C., Umoren, P. E., & Okon, E. U. (2021). Organisational communication climate and job performance of employees at Cross River University of Technology, Nigeria *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review*, 4 (6), 44-57. doi:10.1016/j.ijsmr.2014.07.010.
- Anyanwu, F. C., & Nwachukwu, C. U. (2022). Employee engagement and CSR practices perception in South-Eastern Nigeria *African Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 89–105.
- Duh, H. I., & Uford, I. C. (2019). Examining contributions of customer-based and employee-based brand equity to a retail bank's market performance using resource-based theory. *The Retail and Marketing Review*, 15(1), 27-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmm.2013.09.016>
- Eneh, O. C., & Onyeizugbe, C. U. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) awareness and implementation in Nigerian SMEs: A study of SDG 8. *Nigerian Journal of Management Sciences*, 8(1), 56-70.
- Etim, G. S., & Uford, I. C. (2019). Measuring the Contributions of Sources of Employee-Based Brand Equity to the Market Performance of Deposit Money Banks in Nigeria. *Business and Management Studies*, 5(2), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bms.2012.09.010>.
- Eze, C. M., & Osuji, E. O. (2021). Localisation of the SDGs: The role of local institutions in Nigeria *Journal of African Development Policy*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 132–148.
- Ibrahim, K. A., & Yusuf, B. A. (2021). Small Businesses and Sustainable Development Goals: Evidence from Northern Nigeria *Journal of Business and Economic Development*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 119–130.
- International Labour Organisation (2020). Decent Work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/lang--en/index.htm>
- International Labour Organisation (2020). Decent work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/lang--en/index.htm>

- Obisi, C., & Nwachukwu, O. (2022). Working Conditions and Decent Work Deficit in Nigeria: A Critical Review *International Journal of Labour Research*, 14(2), 47-61.
- Ogunleye, J. O., & Ojo, T. F. (2022). Employee perception and organisational commitment in Nigerian public service. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 12(1), pp. 112–128.
- Ojo, L., & Eze, B. C. (2023). Assessing Employee Perception of Workplace Sustainability Practices in Nigerian SMEs *Journal of Organisational Development and Sustainability*, 5(2), 74-88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jods.2015.08.010>.
- Okafor, G. & Onyema, E. (2021). Achieving decent work in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects under the Sustainable Development Goal 8 *African Journal of Economic Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 92–107.
- Okorie, U., & Adebayo, S. (2022). Corporate sustainability reporting and organisational performance in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Business Practice*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 66–81.
- Uddin, M. M., Alam, M. M., & Islam, M. M. (2022). Organisational response to sustainable development goals: Employee Perception and Engagement *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 344, 130849. DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.130849
- Uford, I. C. (2017). Customer and Employee-based Brand Equity Driving United Bank for Africa's Market Performance (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, School of Economic & Business Sciences).
- Umoren, P. E. (2025). Organisational communication via social media and customers' perception of brand reputation of commercial banks in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics, Innovative Management and Entrepreneurship*, 3(3), pp. 57-76.
- Umoren, P. E., & Udonquak, A. A. (2021). Rural development issues, social media and national development in contemporary Nigeria. *AJSS*, 1(1), 287-297.
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming the World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming the world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- Wilson, J. (2019). Understanding organisational behaviour for improved performance: A sustainability perspective *Journal of Business Research*, 101, 523-531. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.048>