



## Affiliative Humour and Employee Resilience in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria

BY

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### Article History

Received: 21/11/2024

Accepted: 28/11/2024

Published: 30/11/2024

### Vol –3 Issue – 11

PP: -78-85

### Abstract

*This study examined the relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was 2925 employees of the ten public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was therefore be 394 obtained using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formulation. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. Therefore, the study concludes that the affiliative humour, positively enhances employee responsiveness in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. Thus, the study recommends that managers in public interventionist agencies should promote a positive and supportive work environment that encourages the use of affiliative humour among employees. By using humour to build social connections, create a positive atmosphere, and enhance teamwork. Managers can lead by example and actively engage in positive and inclusive humour.*

**Keywords:** *Affiliative Humour, Employee Responsiveness, Agility, Responsiveness, Resourcefulness*

## INTRODUCTION

Employees that are resilient are able to seek new interests and opportunities as well as develop closer bonds with coworkers (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). Employees are motivated to form social networks at work and take part in activities outside of their designated job tasks by the sense of discovery that comes with trying new things (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). Additionally, resilient workers are more likely to feel happy despite challenging circumstances. According to the literature, happy feelings are associated with successful work outcomes (Fredrickson, 2001). Therefore, it is anticipated that when organizations employ managerial humour, employee resilience at work will be supported.

Organizations are laden with stress, strains, tensions and paradoxes which are observable in the day-to-day activities and relationship between managers/leaders and employees. This relationship explains aspects of organizational effectiveness, efficiency and commitment. Managers engage

in practices that are intended to influence their subordinates (Hiller, DeChurch, Murase & Doty, 2011) to cope with day-to-day interactions and feel a sense of belonging. Stress reduction is a crucial management issue since it could have adverse effects on the productivity of the organization and the ability to retain valuable employees (Miznikova & Schönfeldt, 2010). Geoswami and Nair (2018) posit that managerial humour can make employees experience positive emotions which reduce stress and result in engaged employees. Humour is considered a fundamental ingredient of good and healthy employment relationships, particularly regarding that of managers-employees relationship which has numerous organizational outcomes as proposed by researchers. Miznikova and Schönfeldt (2010) referred that humour is a tool that managers use in achieving benefits in the organization.

Affiliative humour is used to ease tension in interpersonal communication. People who employ this kind of humour tell jokes and funny stories to attract others and improving social



interaction. This position is supported by Ho, Wang, Huang and Chen (2011), they asserted that it is like a lubricant that can easily ease out interpersonal strangeness and nervousness and instill enthusiasm into social occasions. Similarly, this type of humour also has positive correlation with self-esteem, optimism, and a good mood; it is negatively correlated with nervousness and anxiety (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003). Managers who use this humour practice/style tell jokes or funny things to relief interpersonal tension and provide subordinates with the sense of comfort; these managers are usually liked by others and seen as non-threatening. Ho, Wang, Huang and Chen (2011) also opined that applying affiliative humour in an organization is often built on the hope to minimize the strange feelings with subordinates, shorten mutual distance, try to bring members together and create solidarity and a positive environment so that the individuals and team can work toward common goals.

Affiliative humour refers to a type of humour that is used to create a sense of connection or affiliation between individuals. It involves using humour to create a positive atmosphere and to build relationships with others. According to Miczo and Welter (2006), affiliative humour is often used in social situations to break the ice or to ease tension. It can also be used to show support for others, to build trust, and to create a sense of camaraderie. Affiliative humour can take many forms, including jokes, teasing, and playful banter. It is often used in a lighthearted and playful manner, and it is not intended to be hurtful or offensive. In fact, one of the key features of affiliative humour is that it is inclusive and creates a sense of belonging among individuals. As Miczo and Welter (2006) note, affiliative humour can be a powerful tool for building relationships and creating a positive social atmosphere. The purpose of this paper therefore was to examine the relationship between affiliative humour and employee resilience in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

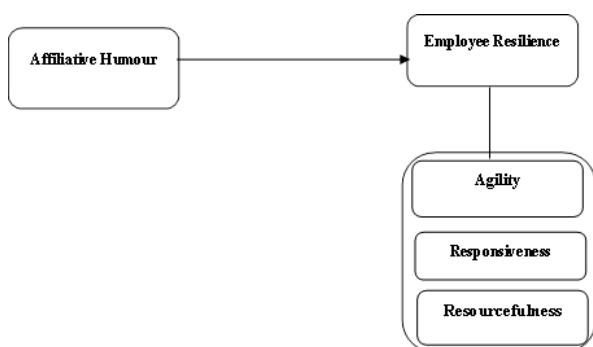


Figure 1: conceptual model for the relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

Source: Desk Research (2023)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

#### Incongruity Theory

This theory of humour was first mentioned by a German Philosopher, Emmanuel Kant in 1790 and was further explained in “The World as Will and Idea”, by Arthur

Schopenhauer in 1819 who asserted that laughter is a means of acknowledging the humour that results when there is a disconnect between one idea and one’s expectations. This theory attempts to explain what can be considered as humorous. It is built on the premise that surprises and uncommon circumstances engender humour (Meyer, 2000).

Incongruity theory was first introduced by Immanuel Kant in Critique of Judgment, where he explained that humour arises from the unexpected and inexplicable situation, which creates an incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. According to the theory, humour is created by the violation of our expectations and by the unexpectedness of the situation. The theory is based on the assumption that humour is an intellectual experience that is created by the sudden shift from one mental state to another. As Kulka (2007) states, "humour arises from a sudden and unexpected shift from one mental state to another that is incongruous with the first." This shift creates a "surprise effect," which is essential to humour. The incongruity theory suggests that humour is created when there is a violation of what is expected, and this violation is perceived as harmless. The theory also suggests that humour is a universal human experience that can be found in all cultures and societies. As Kulka (2007) further explains, "Incongruity theory is one of the most widely accepted theories of humour, and it provides a useful framework for understanding the cognitive processes that underlie humour." The theory has been widely studied in the fields of psychology, philosophy, and linguistics, and has been used to explain the role of humour in human communication. In conclusion, the incongruity theory provides a useful framework for understanding the cognitive processes that underlie humour and highlights the importance of the unexpected in creating a humorous experience.

#### Affiliative Humour

Affiliative humour is a type of humour that is used to strengthen social bonds and relationships. This type of humour is characterized by positive and lighthearted jokes, teasing, and playful banter. According to Wisse and Rietzschel (2014), affiliative humour has several benefits in relationships. Firstly, it can increase intimacy and trust between partners. When partners share a sense of humour and can make each other laugh, they are more likely to feel connected and comfortable with one another. Furthermore, affiliative humour can reduce conflict and tension in relationships. When partners use humour to diffuse stressful situations, they are less likely to become defensive and escalate the conflict. Finally, affiliative humour can improve overall relationship satisfaction. When partners feel that they can have fun and enjoy each other's company, they are more likely to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction. In conclusion, affiliative humour can have numerous positive effects on relationships, including increased intimacy, reduced conflict, and improved satisfaction.

Affiliative humour is a type of humour that is utilized to create a positive and friendly relationship among individuals. While this type of humour can be effective in building bonds and reducing tension, it is important to use it appropriately to

avoid any negative consequences. According to Romero and Cruthirds (2006), one important tip for using affiliative humour appropriately is to ensure that the humour is inoffensive and does not offend or belittle anyone. This means avoiding making jokes that are sexist, racist, or discriminatory in any way. Additionally, it is important to consider the context in which the humour is being used. For example, using humour in a professional setting may require a different level of appropriateness than using humour with close friends or family members. Another tip for using affiliative humour appropriately is to make sure that everyone involved in the conversation understands the humour. This means that individuals should not use humour that relies on cultural or social references that may not be universally understood. Finally, it is important to be aware of the effect that humour may have on different individuals. While some individuals may appreciate and enjoy humour, others may find it uncomfortable or inappropriate. Therefore, it is important to be sensitive to the reactions of others and adjust humour use accordingly. By following these tips, individuals can use affiliative humour appropriately to build positive relationships and create a pleasant atmosphere.

### Employee Resilience

Employee resilience has been advocated as a way to concentrate on the empirical investigation of individual resilience in organizational settings to the context of "work-specific" resilient behaviors (Näswwallet *et al.*, 2015). Employee resilience is described as "employee capability, facilitated and supported by the organization, to utilize resources to consistently adapt and flourish at work, even if/when faced with tough conditions" (Näswwallet *et al.*, 2015), in line with the ecological perspective on resilience. One of the definition's main claims is that "organizational enablers"—support from the organization—can help to promote employee resilience. According to Näswwallet *et al.* (2015), employee resilience influences key performance factors such as positive employee attitudes and behaviors. Employee resilience may also be thought of as a protective element in how well workers adapt to change at work (Shin *et al.*, 2012). According to study, resilient workers are better at adapting to essential organizational changes and recovering from disruptions at work than non-resilient workers in terms of their overall wellbeing at work (Shin *et al.*, 2012).

Resilience is frequently defined as a personality attribute that facilitates adjustment to adversity and is assessed using trait variables (such as optimism and hardiness) or health outcome indicators (such as wellbeing and mental health) (Robertson *et al.*, 2015). Recent scholarship has sought to distinguish resilience from its dispositional and wellbeing correlates and to understand how individual resilience is manifested in work-related behaviors in light of the growing interest in organizational resilience, particularly the ways in which the workforce can contribute to a resilient organization (Lee *et al.*, 2013; Nilakant *et al.*, 2016). (e.g., Bardeel *et al.*, 2014; Pipe *et al.*, 2012; Southwick *et al.*, 2014). According to this body of research, organizations may foster and promote resilient

behaviors, and changes in employee resilience levels depend on the accessibility and effective use of workplace resources

### Measures of Employee Resilience

#### Employee Agility

The idea of agility gives businesses and their personnel the chance to be more adaptable, quick to change, and quick to react to risk and uncertainty in the marketplace (Sherehiy, Karwowski & Layer, 2007). Agility enables organizations to swiftly detect changes in their market, capitalize on those changes, and adapt their goods to those external developments that present opportunities for them (Kumkale, 2016; Shin, Taylor & Seo, 2015; Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2009). Another way to think of agility is as a tool for increasing a firm's performance and the effectiveness of its competitive activity and inventory in response to environmental changes (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011).

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Agility is the propensity for a person to swiftly replenish their capacity for adaptation and adjustment as well as to handle a culture that is chaotic, uncertain, and ever-changing in the workplace (Alavi, Wahab, Muhamad & Arbab Shirani, 2014). Being an agile employee requires a variety of qualities such as sensitivity, swiftness competence, and flexibility because it is not a type of mismatch with stability. Nevertheless, countless studies have found that employees—not specialized components, as previously believed by academics and managers—are the key to agility. As most managers have a tendency to believe, a company's development is not what makes it nimble or agile; instead, it should not be set up to employ progression to react to the dynamic condition.

#### Employee Responsiveness

The idea of being responsive is put forth as a way for organizations to benefit from environmental changes. Being responsive means having the capacity to deal with unforeseen changes, endure unheard-of business environment challenges, and seize opportunities presented by changes (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). Employee responsiveness is the organization's capacity to adapt swiftly and nimbly to the shifting demands of the market and to changes in the local and global environment (Sherehiy, 2008). It is an administrative tactic designed to preserve the company's resources and promptly fulfill consumers' requests (Hitt, Hoskisson, Robert & Duane, 2007). Therefore, it relates to the organization's capacity for swift responses to opportunities and timely threat mitigation (Overby, Bharadwaj & Sambamurthy, 2006). It relates to an

organization's capacity to flourish in a setting of unpredictably constant change (Karami, 2007).

Employee responsiveness is a collection of concepts that aims to continuously improve the company and make efficient and effective use of both tangible and intangible resources (David, 2009). To attain excellence in the organization's offerings, the method involves concentrating the organization's efforts by concentrating on specific markets and products (Hill & Jones, 2009). The capacity of an organization to promptly recognize environmental changes and seize these changes as opportunities (Fleece, 2007). The business's capacity to swiftly and effectively satisfy the demands and desires of its customers (McCarthy, Lawrence, Wixted & Gordon, 2010).

The dynamic and spontaneous changes that the current business environment constantly presents to today's organizations serve as a reminder of the importance of increased organizational flexibility and adaptation. Rising levels of competition, shifting market structures, innovation, and technological advancements are just a few of the elements that organizations must urgently address in order to continue to grow and evolve. In order for employees to perform well in new or changing work conditions, there is a greater need for them to be progressively adaptive, resourceful, and forbearing in the face of uncertainty. This is implied by the rapid speed of environmental and organizational change (Pulakos et al., 2000).

#### Employee Resourcefulness

According to Jui-Chang and Chien-Yu (2017), a situational attribute that employees use to function in the workplace is job resourcefulness. Situational qualities, including conscientiousness, openness, competitiveness, and activity requirements, are produced by the simultaneous impacts of elemental and well-known features. Because resourcefulness is common and is not negatively impacted by a lack of training, poor social support, insufficient empowerment, and insufficient rewards, it is a crucial personality trait (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). Additionally, in today's organizational environment, employee job resourcefulness is critical since lead employees need to possess the necessary competencies in the art of working under pressure and interacting with clients (Karatepe & Douri, 2012; Yavas et al., 2011b).

Employee job resourcefulness is a crucial or significant personality feature that helps people carry out duties more favorably even when they may have fewer resources because it is an individual resource (Yavas et al., 2011a). According to Licata et al. (2003), resourcefulness is a long-term mindset that aids people in obtaining the limited resources required in overcoming challenges while pursuing career-related goals. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize that personality traits are essential for front-line personnel in organizations who are expected to be adept at handling interpersonal encounters with clients on a regular basis (Ashill et al., 2009). When referring to employees, resourcefulness refers to the capacity to acquire and put to use aptitudes that are helpful in resolving issues, making them productive in achieving objectives. Employees that possess specialized abilities that help them to overcome

challenging obstacles can produce ideas and use them successfully to stop any given situation. Resourcefulness can occasionally be seen as a result of training, mentoring, and the idealized effect of managers on employees, which can result in the expression of creative behaviors.

#### Affiliative Humour and Employee Resilience

Yunneng, Yusof and Nasuridin (2022) examined the impact of leader affiliative humour style on employees work engagement among new generation employees: from the perspective of positive psychology. In order to better manage the new generation of employees and improve their work engagement in the organization, this article studies the impact of leader affiliative humour style on work engagement. Design/methodology/approach: Taking 285 new generation employees of Chinese enterprises as the research respondent, using literature research and quantitative research methods, this study uses SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 23.0 software for data statistical analysis to demonstrate hypothesis research. Findings: This study found that leader affiliative humour style (LAHS) have a positive impact on positive emotion. Positive emotion plays a mediating role between LAHS and work engagement. Organizational support moderates the relationship between LAHS and positive emotion, and organizational support can moderate the mediating role of positive emotion between LAHS and work engagement. Research limitations/implications: The data research is not wide enough and still belongs to cross-sectional research. Some longitudinal research and design can be added in the future. Practical implications: The results show that LAHS can improve employees' positive emotion, which shows that company should give employees more care and fully mobilize employees' positive emotion. The organization should create a harmonious organizational support atmosphere for employees. Employees will attach great importance to the interests of the organization and do it as their own business. They will be more responsible and invested in their work.

Based on the foregoing, the study hypothesized thus:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Affiliative Humour and Employee Agility in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Affiliative Humour and Employee Responsiveness in Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Affiliative Humour and Employee Resourcefulness in Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was 2925 employees of the ten public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was therefore be 394 obtained using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formulation. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items

scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The table below shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for affiliative humour and measures of employee resilience. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

**Table 1 Correlations matrix for affiliative humour and measures of employee resilience**

			Affiliative Humour	Employee Agility	Employee Responsiveness	Employee Resourcefulness
Spearman's rho	Affiliative Humour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.785**	.700**	.832**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	328	328	328	328
	Employee Agility	Correlation Coefficient	.785**	1.000	.813**	.694**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	328	328	328	328
	Employee Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.700**	.813**	1.000	.655**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	328	328	328	328
	Employee Resourcefulness	Correlation Coefficient	.832**	.694**	.655**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	328	328	328	328

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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**Source: SPSS Output**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee agility in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in Table 1 was used to answer research question 1. It shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.785 on the relationship between affiliative humour and employee agility. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee agility was as a result of the adoption of affiliative humour. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between affiliative humour and employee agility in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria. Similarly displayed in the table above is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained, the sig- calculated is less than significant level (p = 0.000 < 0.05). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee agility in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

Secondly, Table 1 also shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.700 on the relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee responsiveness was as a result of the adoption of affiliative humour. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness of in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria. Also displayed in the table above the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from the table, the sig- calculated is less than significant level (p = 0.000 < 0.05). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee responsiveness in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.



**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee resourcefulness in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.832 on the relationship between affiliative humour and employee resourcefulness. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee resourcefulness was as a result of the adoption of affiliative humour. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between affiliative humour and employee resourcefulness in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria. Also displayed in the table above is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from the table, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee resourcefulness in Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between affiliative humour and employee resilience (agility, responsiveness and resourcefulness) in public interventionist agencies in South-South, Nigeria. This finding corroborates with Yunneng, Yusof and Nasurdin (2022) who examined the impact of leader affiliative humour style on employees work engagement among new generation employees of Chinese enterprises and found that leader affiliative humour style (LAHS) has a positive impact on positive emotion. Positive emotion plays a mediating role between LAHS and work engagement. Organizational support moderates the relationship between LAHS and positive emotion, and organizational support can moderate the mediating role of positive emotion between LAHS and work engagement.

Also, the current finding provides empirical support for the finding of Lazzaro, Bolton and Kieffer (2022) who examined if any, specific forms of humour may enhance romantic relationships and found that affiliative humour was associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, while self-enhancing humour was associated with less psychological distress and thus greater wellbeing. Self-enhancing humour and relationship satisfaction were also positively correlated. Aggressive humour was not found to be associated with lower relationship satisfaction and self-defeating humour was not found to be associated with anxiety. Possible implications and limitations of this study are discussed.

In a similar vein, the current finding buttresses the earlier finding of Van den Broeck, Van Hootegeem, Vander Elst, and De Witte (2019) who conducted a study to find out if self-enhancing and affiliative humour buffer for the negative

associations of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity? Results evidenced the detrimental main effects of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity as well as the beneficial relations of self-enhancing and affiliative humour on burnout and work engagement. In addition, the buffering role of affiliative humour was supported in the relationships of both quantitative and qualitative job insecurity with burnout. Self-enhancing humour only interacted with qualitative job insecurity in the prediction of exhaustion. The discussion centers around the importance of personal resources attenuating the negative associations of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, and highlights the different roles of humour for employees' work-related well-being.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that the use of affiliative humour by managers within Public Interventionist Agencies in South-South, Nigeria positively influences the resilience of their employees. The results suggest that managers who employ affiliative humour, which involves the use of positive and inclusive humour to create a sense of belonging and camaraderie, can foster a resilient workforce.

Based on the foregoing, the study thus recommends that Managers in Public Interventionist Agencies should promote a positive and supportive work environment that encourages the use of affiliative humour among employees. By using humour to build social connections, create a positive atmosphere, and enhance teamwork. Managers can lead by example and actively engage in positive and inclusive humour.

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