

Employee Commitment and Organizational Performance of SMES in Delta State

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Abstract

The study Employee Commitment and Organizational Performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State explores the relationship between, job satisfaction, organizational climate, and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State, Nigeria. The primary objectives were to determine if job satisfaction affects SME performance and examine organizational climate's influence on SME outcomes. A descriptive research design was employed to achieve these objectives, involving 269 respondents from various SMEs across the state. Data were collected using structured questionnaires targeting employees and managers. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative insights. Descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data and test the hypothesized relationships. The findings indicated that job satisfaction significantly impacts SME performance, with a strong positive correlation. Employees who were satisfied with their jobs demonstrated higher commitment and productivity, leading to better organizational outcomes. Similarly, a positive organizational climate was found to enhance SME performance significantly. Based on these findings, several recommendations were made to improve SME performance in Delta State. These include enhancing job satisfaction through competitive salaries and career development opportunities, fostering a positive organizational climate by encouraging open communication and investing in employee development through regular training programs, strengthening leadership practices, and continuously monitoring and refining human resource practices. The study emphasized the critical need for SMEs in Delta State to prioritize employee satisfaction and a supportive organizational climate as key strategies for enhancing performance and achieving sustainable growth.

Keywords: Employee Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Climate, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

Introduction

Organizations around the world today are faced with new challenges regarding how to sustain productivity and create committed employees. Organizations have realized that the performance of their employees plays a pivotal role in determining the organization's success (1). As a result, employees should not be treated as robots or mechanical tools as in the 19th century which led to the Industrial Revolution. It has been said that no firm can perform at its zenith point without each member of staff being committed to the organizational goals and objectives regularly (2). Firms can cultivate a culture of dedication or employee commitment by emphasizing employee involvement, work satisfaction, and motivation. Committed employees play a significant role in defining the productivity and success of an organization. Committed employees are more inspired, engaged, and ready to go the extra mile

to achieve the goals of the organization. This can lead to higher levels of productivity and increased efficiency. Employee dedication is not only a human relation notion but also involves generating human energy and activating the human mind (3). Dedicated or committed employees take pride in organizational members and have a strong belief in the vision and goals of the firm and this will trigger a higher level of productivity on their part. The most important asset of any organization or firm is the human asset (4). Organizations are facing new and unprecedented challenges regarding sustained productivity and how to create a workforce that is committed. Therefore, no firm whether small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or multinationals can perform at their best levels unless each staff is dedicated to the organization's goals. Therefore, it is imperative to understand

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(Received 31st August 2024; Accepted 14th January 2025; Published 31st January 2025)

what commitment are about (5). The catalyst for improving satisfaction and performance is employee commitment (6). Employee commitment is that magic thread that binds employees to a course of action relevant to one or more targets (7). It has been said that the human capital system facilitates organizational competencies by eliciting employees' commitment to the organization (8). Although employee commitment is important for organizational success, organizations struggle to nurture and sustain high levels of employee commitment. This poses significant challenges to small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) as low levels of commitment can lead to absenteeism, lateness, poor attitude to work, poor organizational performance, and increased turnover rates (9). Research has shown that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in any economy. SMEs are the engine room of any economy because they help drive economic growth by feeding bigger firms and helping to create employment. SMEs are the Kingpin around which rapid and accelerated industrial, economic, social, and development revolve. SMEs play a fundamental role in any economy, and their importance to growth and development cannot be overemphasized. However, there remains a lacuna in getting to know the exact mechanisms through which employee commitment affects the activities of SME performance in Delta State of Nigeria. Although there are many studies on employee commitment and performance in the developed world, only a few have been conducted in SMEs in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State with its unique socio-economic and political landscape. The few conducted did not combine the employee commitment variables used in this study. This study fills this lacuna. The study aims to investigate the impact of job satisfaction and organizational climate on the performance of SMEs in Delta State. The study provides answers to the following research questions: Does job satisfaction affect SMEs' performance? And does organizational climate affect SMEs' performance? Employee commitment can be seen as the degree or extent to which the employee feels devoted to their organization or job (10). Employee commitment is an effective response to the whole organization and the degree of attachment or

loyalty employees feel toward the organization (11). In addition, employee commitment can be described as simply employees' attitude to the organization (1). Employee commitment is a mindset that binds an employee to an organization thereby reducing the problem of employee turnover, absenteeism, and other negative behavior that prevent an organization from reaching its target. This mindset or psychological state can take different forms, but the result is that it binds the employee to a particular course of action that is beneficial to the firm (12, 13). Employee commitment has been defined by various scholars. It is important to note that all these definitions take into consideration two factors, which are loyalty and affection. However, it should be noted that employees are committed or dedicated to their work or organization when they perceive fairness in their psychological contract. This study looked at the work of Meyer and Allen's three-component model. They are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is linked to the employee's emotional state, affinity with, and participation in the business. Employees who are effectively committed stay with the organization because they want to. They become emotionally interested in what the organization does and develop emotional ties with it due to factors like job satisfaction and a conducive working organizational climate. Affective commitment is the most important form of commitment according to researchers, the current definition of commitment. Affective commitment is fundamental to the smooth running of SMEs (14). This is because; when employees of SME are content with their work this can trigger affective commitment. In addition, when the environment is conducive, this can also enhance affective commitment among staff of SMEs within Delta State. Continuance commitment is connected to the employee's cost of leaving the organization. When employees realize their salary or bonuses will not improve when they decide to remain in the organization, this may make them remain (14). When employees know that there are no jobs, this might trigger continuance commitment. Therefore, when employees are not exposed to alternatives, this affects their perception of alternatives, increasing their continuance

commitment to the organization. In Delta State where there are few jobs available continuance commitment is necessary to help employees keep their jobs. Normative commitment is related to employees feeling obligated to remain with the organization because they should, and it is proper to do so. Studies have also shown that the longer the employee remains with the organization the bigger the sense of attachment as the employee feels a bigger sense of obligation. The antecedents associated with normative commitment are socialization and investment provided by the organization for the employees. SME managers can invest in their workers as this will increase or trigger normative commitment (14). Employee commitment acts as a catalyst in promoting organizational success and employee well-being. Knowing the pertinent factors that contribute to commitment and its cost will help SME managers in the state develop approaches to improve employee well-being. Employees in all firms are the most important resources any organization can boost because they have the potential to ruin or make the unit succeed. Firms worldwide have come to realize that the performance of their workforce is fundamental to achieving the goals and objectives of the organization (1). A committed employee is dedicated to the firm when he/she is ready to sacrifice his time or energy or whatever it takes for the success of the firm (15). For this reason, managers and employers of labors should look for ways to get the best out of their staff. This is very important because of the dynamics in the business environment. Human factors are very strategic for business organizations to gain sustainable competitive advantage (16). Employee commitment is not static and can vary over time. There are certain pertinent factors such as changes in organizational climate, organizational structure, leadership, or changes in job roles may influence employees' commitment levels. Moreover, other characteristics, such as personality traits and work-life balance preferences, can also impact the strength of employee commitment. Therefore, organizations need to continuously monitor and nurture employee commitment through strategies that promote a positive work environment, foster open communication, and recognize and reward employee contributions. The essence of having

committed employees cannot be overemphasized. Today's business environment is dynamic; firms must ensure that they have committed employees to stay healthy. The importance of dedicated or committed employees cannot be overemphasized. Committed employees contribute to the growth of the firm. They also ensure that customers are adequately satisfied for the overall benefit of themselves and the firm (17). Employees who are not committed waste time surfing the web and using e-mail and instant messaging for personal benefit. They generally take a longer time to accomplish the tasks assigned (18). The reverse is the case when employees are committed. When employees are committed, they invest time, effort, and brain power in producing the best products or services possible. They take pride in their work, meaning they will give their firms a better out in the market simply by producing a superior product (14). Committed employees are happy employees. Better morale is contagious, it leads to a pleasant work environment and improved organizational performance in SMEs. Job satisfaction has to do with the collection of feelings and beliefs that employees have about their jobs. Employees or workers that are high in job satisfaction generally like their jobs and have the belief that their job has many desirable characteristics like good pay, job security, or nice or supporting staff (19). In a similar development, job satisfaction is the extent to which a worker is content with the reward he/she gets out of his/her job, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation (20). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to perform above and beyond the call of duty which can range from putting in extra-long hours whenever the need arises, to coming up with innovative and creative ideas and overcoming obstacles to implement them. Job satisfaction and SME performance are interrelated. When an employee is satisfied with his/her job, this will lead to increased performance. SME managers should invest in plans to improve job satisfaction among workers. They should understand what it takes for an employee to be satisfied with his job. Organizational climate can be described as the shared perceptions, feelings, and attitudes organizational members have about the fundamental elements of the organization which reflect the established norms, values, and

attitudes of the organization's culture and influence individuals' behavior either positively or negatively (21). Organizational climate refers to the ethos of, or commonly perceived feeling about an organization. It is based on tangible factors like the prevailing management style, the clarity of goals and values, etc. (20). There is no gain in saying that organizational climate plays an important role in shaping staff behavior, attitude, and organizational outcomes among SMEs. When the climate is conducive and supportive, this will enhance employee performance which will culminate in improved performance. Managers of SMEs should ensure that the climate in their various firms can trigger employees to put in their best in whatever they are doing for the firm. Organizational performance is a means of how efficiently and effectively managers of SMEs use resources to satisfy customers and achieve their goals. Organizational performance increases in direct proportion to an increase in efficiency and effectiveness (19). Employee commitment has been found to positively impact organizational performance with SMEs. Organizational performance is a function of the workforce, and the workforce can be said to be a function of motivation (22). There are so many ways to explain what organizational performance is all about. Organizational performance is directly related to profitability and sales performance which is linked to the hard work of committed employees in SMEs. This work is anchored on expectancy theory. Motivation will be high when workers believe that high levels of effort will lead to high performance and that high performance will lead to the attainment of desired outcomes (23). Expectancy theory is one of the most popular theories of work motivation because it focuses on all three parts of the motivation equation inputs, performance, and outcomes (19). It is a motivational theory that proposes that individuals are motivated to act in certain ways based on their beliefs about the expected outcomes of their actions and the desirability of those outcomes. In the context of employee commitment, Expectancy Theory suggests that employees' commitment to their organization is influenced by their beliefs about the relationship between their efforts, performance, and outcomes (23). Expectancy theory is of importance to the study because it will assist managers of SMEs in

understanding what employees need to be committed to or motivated to enable them to achieve organizational goals. This is concomitant to improved performance and organizational success.

Materials and Method

The study on Employee Commitment and Performance of SMEs in Delta State adopted a descriptive research design to explore the relationship between employee commitment and organizational performance among 1,524 registered SMEs operating in Delta State, Nigeria (24). This design was chosen as it provides a deep understanding of the variables in their natural setting. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness across the diverse sectors within the SME population and across Delta State's 25 local government areas (LGAs). The LGAs were used as strata to account for the distinct cultural, environmental, and economic characteristics of each region, such as differences in language, riverine or land-based areas, and SME specializations. This approach ensured full representativeness by capturing the diversity of SMEs within the state. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 317 employees was determined, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, ensuring adequate statistical power for the study. The inclusion criteria for SMEs included: being officially registered, having been in operation for at least three years, and employing a minimum of five staff members. Employees and managers from the sampled SMEs were selected to provide insights on employee commitment and organizational performance. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires tailored to measure employee commitment and SME performance. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions Likert scale questions to capture quantitative data and open-ended questions to gather qualitative information. Employee commitment was assessed using validated scales covering dimensions such as job satisfaction, organizational climate, and affective commitment. SME performance was evaluated through financial metrics (e.g., revenue growth, profit margins), operational efficiency, and employee productivity. To ensure the validity of the instruments, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in

organizational behavior and tested in a pilot study involving 30 SME employees and managers from Delta State. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability, with all constructs yielding coefficients above 0.7, indicating high internal consistency. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, summarized the demographic characteristics of respondents and the key variables of interest. Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypothesized relationships between employee commitment and SME performance. Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the strength and direction of

relationships between employee commitment and performance, while regression analysis determined the extent to which employee commitment predicted SME performance. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and their rights, ensuring informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and data was used exclusively for research purposes. Respondents were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Out of the 317 distributed questionnaires, 269 were completed and returned error-free, achieving an 85% response rate, and were deemed suitable for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Summary of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	129	48
	Female	140	52
	Subtotal	269	100
Age	Under 25	27	10
	25-34	108	40.1
	35-44	81	30.1
	45-54	40	14.9
	55 and above	13	4.9
Educational Qualification	Subtotal	269	100
	Secondary School	27	10
	Diploma/OND	54	20.1
	Bachelor's Degree/HND	108	40.1
	Master's Degree	67	24.9
	Doctorate	13	4.9
Type of SME	Subtotal	269	100
	Retail and wholesaling	40	14.9
	Services	94	35
	Manufacturing	81	30.1
	Agriculture	40	14.9
	Hospitality	14	5.2
	Subtotal	269	100

From Table 1, the demographic summary of respondents highlights that of the 269 participants, 52% are female, and 48% are male. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents (40.1%) are between 25 and 34 years old, while 30.1% are aged between 35 and 44 years. Educational qualifications indicate that 40.1% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree or Higher National Diploma (HND), while 24.9% have a Master's Degree, and 20.1% possess a Diploma/OND. Regarding the type of SME, 35%

of respondents are engaged in services, followed by 30.1% in manufacturing and 14.9% each in retail and wholesaling, and agriculture. The demographic profile indicates that most respondents are between 25 and 44 years old, with a significant proportion holding a Bachelor's Degree or HND. The majority work in the services and manufacturing sectors. This distribution suggests that the findings are reflective of a relatively young and educated workforce, typical of SMEs in Delta State.

Table 2: Summary of Responses to Research Questions

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	St. Deviation
A. Job Satisfaction and its Influence on SME Performance							
I am satisfied with my current job.	30	75	29	54	81	2.70	1.25
My job provides opportunities for growth and advancement.	87	65	25	43	49	3.36	1.23
Overall job satisfaction positively influences the performance of my SME.	108	81	23	34	23	3.81	0.83
Job satisfaction increases my commitment to my SME.	98	66	19	54	32	3.54	1.18
A high level of job satisfaction among employees enhances SME performance.	108	81	18	36	26	3.78	1.01
I am motivated to perform well because I am satisfied with my job.	26	81	27	26	109	2.59	1.36
Average						3.92	1.31
B. Organizational Climate on SME Performance							
The organizational climate in my SME is positive.	54	68	33	99	15	3.17	0.86
I feel supported by my supervisors and colleagues.	67	56	46	89	11	3.29	0.51
There is effective communication within my SME.	56	45	45	67	56	2.92	1.07
The organizational climate influences my commitment to my SME.	89	35	23	86	36	3.20	1.28
A positive organizational climate enhances the performance of my SME.	97	87	34	33	18	3.79	0.15
. The organizational climate affects my motivation to perform well.	97	76	23	44	29	3.62	1.01
Average						3.33	0.81
C. SMEs' Performance and Productivity							
Our SME has achieved its financial goals over the past year.	38	87	14	98	32	3.00	1.19
The productivity	66	43	54	45	61	3.03	0.99

levels in our SME have increased over the past year.

Customer satisfaction with our products /services is high.	78	88	32	44	27	3.54	0.77
4. Our SME has experienced growth in market share over the past year.	94	54	13	51	57	3.29	1.47
5. Employee morale and engagement in our SMEs is high.	34	56	54	46	79	2.70	1.04
Our SME effectively adapts to changes in the market and industry.	46	94	22	47	60	3.07	1.25
The quality of our products/ services has improved over the past year.	101	87	11	22	48	3.64	1.34
Overall, our SME is performing well compared to our competitors.	65	87	44	34	39	3.39	0.66
Average						3.20	1.09

Table 2, Summary of Responses to Research Questions on panel A. (Job Satisfaction and Its Influence on SME Performance) suggests moderate levels of job satisfaction among employees in SMEs, with a mean score of 2.70 for overall satisfaction. Respondents indicated that their job provides opportunities for growth (mean = 3.36). Importantly, job satisfaction is perceived to have a strong positive influence on SME performance (mean = 3.81). Additionally, employees believe that job satisfaction increases their commitment to the SME (mean = 3.54). However, the motivation to perform well, as a result of job satisfaction, scored lower with a mean of 2.59. On Table 2, panel B. (Organizational Climate on SME Performance), The results show a generally positive perception of organizational climate, with a mean of 3.17. Respondents feel moderately supported by supervisors and

colleagues (mean = 3.29), though effective communication within SMEs was rated lower (mean = 2.92). A positive organizational climate is strongly associated with enhanced SME performance (mean = 3.79), and it significantly affects employees' motivation to perform well (mean = 3.62). Also on Table 2, panel C, (SMEs' Performance and Productivity). The performance and productivity metrics suggest mixed results, with financial goal achievement scoring a mean of 3.00. Productivity levels were rated slightly higher (mean = 3.03), while customer satisfaction with products and services scored a mean of 3.54. Market share growth and adaptability to market changes scored moderate means of 3.29 and 3.07, respectively. Employee morale and engagement were relatively low (mean = 2.70), while the quality of products/services improved over the past year, with a mean of 3.64.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Result

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.839 ^a	.705	.702	.583

From Table 3, the regression analysis supported these findings, showing significant positive effects

of both job satisfaction and organizational climate on SME performance, with beta coefficients of

0.517 and 0.429, respectively. The model summary indicated a high R Square value of 0.705, suggesting that approximately 70.5% of the variance in SME performance could be explained by job satisfaction and organizational climate. The ANOVA results confirmed the model's significance ($F = 317.326$, $p < 0.000$), indicating that the predictors, job satisfaction, and organizational climate, significantly contribute to the performance of SMEs confirming that these factors are critical drivers of employee commitment and, subsequently, organizational success.

Discussion

The findings from the study reveal relationships between job satisfaction, organizational climate, and the performance of SMEs in Delta State. The data shows that job satisfaction has a considerable impact on SME performance; with an average mean score of 3.92 and a strong beta coefficient of 0.517. This suggests that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more committed and productive, leading to better organizational outcomes. The substantial agreement among respondents that job satisfaction positively influences SME performance reflects widespread recognition of the crucial role of employee well-being in driving business success. In the context of Delta State, this finding is particularly relevant due to the region's challenging socio-economic conditions, where steady employment is not only a source of income but also a status symbol in local communities. Employees in Delta State, often faced with limited job opportunities and economic uncertainty, place high value on job satisfaction factors such as fair wages, job security, and recognition, which directly influence their level of commitment and productivity. Similarly, the firm climate was found to significantly affect SME performance, with an average mean score of 3.33 and a beta coefficient of 0.429. A positive organizational climate, characterized by effective communication and support from supervisors, fosters a conducive working environment that enhances employee motivation and commitment. In the State, where diverse cultural backgrounds often intersect within workplaces, fostering a positive organizational climate requires sensitivity to the unique cultural differences of the region. Effective communication in SMEs is particularly important,

as many employees operate within an environment influenced by cultural diversity, where language differences, communal traditions, and shared values play an integral role in work relationships. Supervisors who exhibit fairness and inclusivity help to build trust and cooperation among employees, reinforcing a workplace culture that aligns with the communal relationship encouraged in the State. This study's findings are consistent with previous studies, which have also highlighted the critical role of a supportive organizational climate in boosting employee performance and organizational productivity (25). Also, the findings of this study are unique within Delta State, where the interplay of economic challenges and cultural diversity shapes workplace dynamics. For instance, SMEs in the state often function as family-run businesses or community-centered enterprises, emphasizing relational trust, mutual respect, and close supervision. This cultural context amplifies the importance of organizational climate, as employees are more likely to thrive in environments that reflect the state's collectivist social structure. The implications of these results are therefore important for SME managers and policymakers in Delta State. To improve performance, there is a clear need to invest in strategies that enhance job satisfaction and create a positive organizational climate. This could involve providing opportunities for career growth, fostering open communication channels, and ensuring that employees feel valued and supported. In addition, considering the unique socio-economic context, SME managers should prioritize efforts to offer competitive wages, provide stable work conditions, and address the cultural expectations of their workforce, such as recognizing family obligations or promoting culturally inclusive leadership. Comparing these findings with previous studies, there is a general agreement on the importance of job satisfaction and organizational climate in influencing performance (26). However, the stronger emphasis on job satisfaction in this study may differ from some earlier research, possibly due to the unique socio-economic context of Delta State, where job stability and satisfaction are particularly valued in a challenging economic environment. Moreover, the state's distinct cultural landscape, where interpersonal

relationships and communal values hold significant weight, emphasizes the need for SMEs to foster a climate of trust, inclusion, and open communication to fully realize employee potential and improve organizational performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated Employee Commitment and Performance of SMEs in Delta State and aimed to investigate the impact of job satisfaction and organizational climate on the performance of SMEs. The objectives included determining whether job satisfaction affects SME performance and examining the influence of organizational climate on SME outcomes. Key findings revealed that both job satisfaction and organizational climate significantly enhance SME performance. High levels of job satisfaction were associated with increased employee commitment and productivity, while a positive organizational climate fostered a supportive and motivating work environment. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made to improve SME performance in Delta State: Managers of SMEs in Delta State should consider implementing flexible work arrangements to improve job satisfaction. For example, SMEs can introduce staggered work hours or remote work options for roles that allow it, especially in urban areas like Asaba and Warri, where commuting can be expensive and stressful, especially with the hike in transportation costs due to fuel subsidy removal. This would help employees balance work and personal responsibilities, leading to higher satisfaction and commitment. SME managers in Delta State should establish formal recognition programs to celebrate employees' contributions. For instance, monthly or quarterly awards for "Employee of the Month" or "Team Excellence" can be introduced. These programs should include meaningful incentives like small cash bonuses, a plaque displaying their picture, name, and designation, or additional leave days to make employees feel valued and appreciated. Managers of SMEs in Delta State should invest in structured career development initiatives, such as mentorship programs, professional training, and certifications. With Delta State having several higher institutions of learning, partnering with local universities or training institutes in Delta State to provide subsidized professional development courses can help employees up skills

and see clear career growth prospects within the organization. SME managers in the state should establish routine feedback mechanisms, such as quarterly employee surveys or suggestion boxes, to foster open communication. For example, creating a "Feedback Friday" program where employees can share concerns or ideas directly with management in a supportive and non-punitive setting can improve the workplace climate significantly. Managers of SMEs in Delta State should provide leadership and interpersonal skills training for supervisors to create a supportive and motivating organizational climate. Training supervisors on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution, for instance, will equip them to handle employee issues more effectively, particularly in the culturally diverse settings of Delta State's SMEs. By implementing these recommendations, SME managers can create a work environment that fosters employee commitment, engagement, and satisfaction, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance and success.

Abbreviation

SMEs: Small and medium Scale Enterprises.

Acknowledgment

The authors will want to acknowledge the enabling research environment provided by the management of Delta State University of Science and Technology Ozoro.

Author Contributions

Eruteya Ejiro: Conceptualization and Writing, Edewhor Vincent: Methodology and Supervision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics Approval

The consent of all those who participated in the survey was sought. No respondent below the age of 18 was used.

Funding

No funding was received.

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