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Linking Ethnic Identification to Organisational Solidarity.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the process through which ethnic identification (EI) influences employees' sense of organisational solidarity (OS). A survey of 1525 employees working in different ministries of a state government in Nigeria was collected and analysed by means of a regression to investigate EI-OS relationships. As expected, EI was a significant determinant of OS with co-worker social support explaining the rationale for EI-OS relationship. The conceptualisation of OS as a composite construct that manifest in employees' self-efficacy, organisational self-identity and employee voice behaviours is novel. The study provides evidence from an under researched area to further generalise existing debates.

Keywords

Ethnic identification, co-worker social support, Nigeria, organisational solidarity, public sector

Introduction

This paper investigates the relationship between ethnic identification (EI) as a determinant of organisational solidarity (OS). This is done in the context of a State Civil Service in Nigeria; a key government bureaucracy operating in a society where ethnicity is central for creation of social characteristics (Higazi & Lar, 2015). Ethnicity in Nigeria is conceptualised in terms of people's birth place (State or Local Government Area). Following the high rate of unemployment in the country, government (the national cake) is the largest employer of labour in the formal sector (Adeosun, 2011). This has resulted in a struggle for employment quota among federating state in the country. This struggle is also replicated at the state level among local government areas that make up each state in the country. As a way to foster societal inclusiveness, existing literature makes a case for governments to employ people that mirror society's ethnicity categorisations (states or LGAs) (Gera, 2016; Ng & Sears, 2014). The Federal Character Principle (FCP) was established by the Nigerian government to ensure that public sector organisations employ people from different states in the country (Adeosun, 2011; Kendhammer, 2014). FCP also mandates all state government owned organisations to employ people from various Local Government Areas (LGA) in a state (Mustapha, 2007; Osaghae, 1988).

Although the employment of people from the different states and LGAs have been successful in some ways toward ensuring societal inclusiveness, less attention has been paid to the discussion of how to foster organisational solidarity among multi-ethnic employees (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015). This is because ethnicity in Nigeria is perceived mainly within the instrumentalist view (people seeking only the good of their ethnic group) (Oruwari, Owei, & Jev, 2004). Thus, there is growing disquiet from minority employees working in the public sector; suggesting that there still exists a wide spread ethnic discrimination (Creegan, Colgan, Charlesworth, & Robinson, 2003). Consequently, recent representative organisation debates have reached an inconclusive position on the implications of ethnic diversity on organisational solidarity (Olckers & Zyl, 2016)

and as such, this paper attempts to bridge the gap between the debates to provide some form of resolution to the current ambivalent results.

The increase in ethnically diverse workforce has led to a challenge of influencing employees shared interest with their organisations (Ng & Sears, 2014). Employees that perceive themselves as being discriminated as a result of their ethnicity tend to feel demoralised and lose confidence in the system (Brown, 1999). In most multi-ethnic countries, individuals consider themselves in the light of their ethnic groups or extended family, and solidarity to it is comes first in the scheme of things (Agbiboa, 2012). This ethnocentric consideration is dominant in Nigeria within all spheres of life including work; giving managers in the public sector a daunting task of integrating and managing employees from diverse states and LGAs and warrants a need to study how to transfer an employee' individual or ethnic solidarity to organisational solidarity.

OS is conceptualised as an employees' mutual or shared interest with their organisation (Peng & Pierce, 2015), such they to go the extra mile to see their organisation succeed (Moskovich, 2016). It encompasses the way employees think, feel and behave towards their organisation (Hamidullah et al., 2016). Studies suggest that attracting OS involves an emotional attachment to an organisation sometimes referred to as psychological ownership (Dawkins, Tian, Newman, & Martin, 2017; Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, & Gardner, 2003; Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009). Psychological ownership posits that ownership is a means of defining one's self, one's possession, and one's territorial boundary (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). Psychology of possession is innate in every individual such that they sometimes define themselves by what they possess (Hou, Hsu, & Wu, 2009; Peng & Pierce, 2015). Possession may be material or immaterial and the effect of ownership perception may reflect in employees' behavioural, emotional and psychological patterns (Peng & Pierce, 2015).

OS is used to represent how employees think, feel and behave in the like manner of owners of their organisations. Current literature suggest that psychological ownership is rooted in employees'

efficacy, employee identity and employee voice (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). This study conceptualises these attributes as behaviours that employees manifest when they feel a sense of organisational solidarity. Efficacy is used to explain the need for one to have control over one's possession, while employee identity underpins the notion that possessions serve as a means of self-identity; this is as a result of the value placed on an object or possession (Peng & Pierce, 2015). Employee voice explains the need for individuals to own a territory such that they can invest themselves in the organisation, as well as come to intimately understand of the organisation (Peng & Pierce, 2015). OS makes employees define themselves by their organisation, such that the success or otherwise of their organisation reflects on them. They are willing at every opportunity to defend their organisation by their actions and speak well of it.

The conceptualisation of OS in this study is novel and differs from other studies. While organisational solidarity has been narrowed to mean organisational identification (Moskovich, 2016) and horizontal co-operative behaviour (Sanders & Schyns, 2006), this study shows that the concept is a reflective construct that manifest in three distinct employee behaviours. The theoretical framework suggested in this study and confirmed by findings in the later part of this paper makes further contribution by highlighting the mediating role of co-worker social support. Co-worker social support describes employees' willingness to provide extra role support to their colleagues (Chughtai, 2016). This highlights the importance of positive relationships among employees in the formation of the opinion they have about their organisation. Conducting the investigation in Nigeria broadens the literature base of organisational psychology studies by contributing finding from an under researched area.

Drawing on the above background and organisational solidarity theorisation, this study aims to investigate how employees' solidarity toward their organisation is determined by ethnic identification. The rest of this paper is structured as follows: first, the paper presents theoretical expectations (hypotheses) for each of the three-model factor of organisational solidarity and their

relationship with ethnic identification. Secondly, the scales that are used to measure the variables are reported. Findings from data analysis are presented in the third section. Discussions and conclusions are presented at the end.

Employee ethnic identification and co-worker social support

Within multi-ethnic organisations, employees feel a deep sense of commitment to their ethnic heritage (D'Hondt, Eccles, Van Houtte, & Stevens, 2017). This involves employees making effort to get to know their ethnic background better, as well as the values and emotional significances of being part of their ethnic group (Tajfel, 1974). Thus, employee EI involves employees' behavioural manifestation of their ethnic heritage and their perceived acceptance from colleagues who are of different ethnicities (Barron, Hebl, & King, 2011). Employees feel more comfortable to display their ethnic identities when they are among fellow employees of same ethnic group. The challenge that arises, however, is how they are perceived when they relate with others outside their ethnic group (Barron et al., 2011).

As a consequence of the manifestation of different ethnicities at work, managers need to take steps to avoid discriminatory or prejudicial behaviours among employees (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) as this may foster pro-social behaviour among employees of different ethnic groups (Branscombe et al., 1999). Social-identity theory (SIT) is used to explain how ethnic identification results to co-worker social support (McKay & Avery, 2015). The theory suggests that employees' identification with their organisation is subject to the social interaction they have at work (Jackson & Johnson, 2012). SIT supposes that group membership is an important aspect of self and as such when employees behave favourable to others, they feel welcomed. Also, as employees spend more time with colleagues at work, they get to know each other better. Within organisations that have multi-ethnic employee compositions, the tendency for employees to categorise themselves with individuals who are similar to them may be reduced following the positive interactions. This interaction results in a feeling of sense of belonging among their colleagues and by extension with

their organisation. This study therefore suggests that employees' ethnic identification will result in prosocial behaviour and makes the following propositions:

Hypothesis 1: Employee ethnic identification has a positive relationship with co-worker social support.

Co-worker social support and organisational solidarity

This study defines co-worker social support as the willingness of colleagues to co-operate and help each to better perform their jobs and improve their relationships (Chughtai, 2016). Building on the theorisation of OS three-model factors, efficacy is further explained as the belief or expectation that employees will feel creative and competent if they perceive the social context within the organisation to be supportive. Recent studies from Consiglio, Borgogni, Di Tecco and Schaufeli (2016) and Rice (2006) indicate that perception of social context highlights a strong relationship with employee feeling of efficacy. Employees that experience support from their colleagues may also identify with their organisation. Voice behaviour may also be associated with support from colleagues, as employee may be motivated to return the favour to their colleagues by helping them improve their work.

In explaining more about social context, Hwa (2012, p. 119) suggested that support from colleagues fosters a 'positive working environment,... that will enable employees to cope better with job stressors and their sense of personal control'. Employees are able to assert personal control of their work and achieve assigned task following their willingness to share their knowledge and expertise, and the provision of support and encouragement to one another (Joiner, 2007). Thus, the following is expected for the relationship between co-worker social support and the way that employees manifest OS:

Hypothesis 2: Co-worker social support is positively related to employees' efficacy, employee identity and employee voice.

Rationale for linking ethnic identification to the behavioural manifestation of organisational solidarity

Existing studies suggests that EI may result in employees shared interest with their organisation, such that overtly ethnic identifying employee feels, thinks and behaves like they own their organisation (Pepple et al., 2017). The relationship between employees that display OS behaviour at work and EI is currently unknown (Pepple et al., 2017), hence, it is not surprising that scholars argue as to the impact of EI on employees’ solidarity to their organisation (Alesina & Ferrara, 2005; Rasul & Rogger, 2015). In line with the previous SIT theorisation, employees’ solidarity to their ethnicity may be transferred to colleagues who have different ethnicities and by extension to their organisation (Terry et al., 1999). This positive feeling among co-workers may influence how employees feel about their organisation at large. Overall, when employees who identify with their ethnicities feel welcomed among their colleagues, they go the extra mile to support each other. For such employees, their organisation becomes interesting place to work in and may serve as a sense of identification. Given the framework illustrated in the above theorisation, it is therefore apt to expect that:

Hypothesis 3: Co-worker social support mediates the direct relationship ethnic identification has with employees’ efficacy, employee identity and employee voice.

See Figure 1 for framework for linking ethnic identification to organisational solidarity.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Description of Participants

A total of (n =2,500) survey booklets were distributed to employees working in 9 public sector organisations in a state in the southern part of Nigeria. Of this number, (n =1,715) questionnaires

were returned. Upon screening of the returned questionnaires, (n =190) of them were not usable for the following reasons; incomplete filling, having more than one answer to a question, inconsistent response with questions reworded or reversed. At the end of the data screening exercise, only (n =1525) questionnaires are used for analysis in this study.

A summary of the description the participants are as follows; 89% of them were employees (natives) from the state where the organisations are located, while the rest were Nigerian citizens but residing in the state (non-natives). The organisations sampled were fairly representative of the 23 Local Government Areas in the state. Another interesting characteristic of the sample is the number of years that employees have worked for the organisations. About 70% of them have been employed for over 5 years. This implies that majority of the respondent had a good working knowledge of the employee relations issues presented in the survey instrument. The data also showed that 53% of the employees surveyed fall within the senior staff category, while about 14% are at the managerial levels. It is also important to note that over 50% of the participants have been on their current position for more than 5 years. Although not planned, the sample has a balanced gender distribution, with 59% males and 41% females. The sample also shows that the participants had higher levels of education. With over 50% having a bachelor' degree or higher.

Approach

Letter of introduction was sent to the Head of Service of a southern state in Nigeria. Meetings were held with senior officials of the State Civil Service, cumulating to the approval of the study. A letter of authority was provided from office of the Head of Service to the heads of departments and ministry. This letter indicated that due approvals was received for the conduct of the study and solicited for cooperation from staff and management. Following the introduction letter submitted to the heads of the human resource department of the respective ministries, the survey booklets were distributed in paper format to employees of nine ministries in the state. Ethical considerations

were followed in the data collection process. Participants consent were sort and they were assured of their anonymity.

Measures of variables

The scales used to measure the variables in this paper are adapted from validated studies that are mostly used within the field of study. For employee ethnic identification, the study adopts a revised multi group ethnic identity measure (RMEIM) scale proposed by Phinney (1992) and revised by Phinney and Ong (2007). Example of items on the scale are 'I have a strong sense of belonging to my LGA' and 'I understand pretty well what my LGA membership means to me'. The seven items gave a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.84. Co-worker social support scale provided by Caplan, Cobb, and French (1975, pp. 251-252) was adopted for this study. Example statements in the scale include; 'I know I can rely on me colleagues when things get tough at work' and 'my colleagues go out of their way to do things to make my work life easy for me'. Cronbach alpha of 0.75 was reported for the five-item scale. While general self-efficacy scale by Sherer et al. (1982) is used to investigate employee self-efficacy. Examples of statements used in this scale includes; 'I give up on things before completing them' and 'I don't handle them well. Cronbach's alpha reported for the eleven items was 0.91. Organisational self-identity is measured using organisational identification (OID) scale by Mael and Ashforth (1992). Examples of statements in this scale include 'When I talk about my organisation, I usually say 'we', rather than 'they'' and 'my organisation's success is my success'. The five items reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79. Lastly, employee voice is measure using Farh, Zhong, and Organ (2004) voice scale. Example statements include 'I am actively offering suggestions to improve my work procedures and processes' and 'I am actively bringing suggestions to help my organisation run more efficiently and effectively'. Cronbach's alpha reported for the three items was 0.73. As ethnicity is conceptualised in terms of location, the study controls for differences in participants' responses based on state of origin. This

is especially following the high proportion of natives (employees from the state) compared to non-natives (non-Nigerian employees residing in the state).

Results from a principal component analysis (PCA) show that for ethnic identification (7 items), the initial eigen value of the first component explained 52% of the cumulative total variance. All items on the co-worker social support scale (5 items) loaded on a single component and had a cumulative total variance of 50% on the first component. For self-efficacy scale, all 11 loaded on a single component with a total variance of 53% on the first component. Organisational self-identity (5 items) loaded on a single component with a total variance of 56% and employee voice (3 items) also loaded on a single component with a total variance of 66% on the first component. A total variance value of over 50% for all variables in the model suggest that the scales were reliable for investigating the relationships on the theoretical model (Olckers & Zyl, 2016).

The conceptualisation of OS in this study required that a PCA be conducted to determine if the three reflective constructs described (employee self-efficacy, organisational self-identification and employee voice) are distinct constructs. The eigen value showed that the three constructs loaded on 3 components and that cumulatively they explain 57.9 % of the variance in OS. From the rotated component matrix and total variance explained results, self-efficacy loaded on the first component and explained 35% of the cumulative variance, organisational self-identity loaded on the second component and explained 16.6 % of the cumulative variance and employee voice loaded on the third and explained 6.3% of the cumulative variance. This PCA results supports the theorisation of organisational solidarity and contributes the understanding of how it is formed.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy for each of the scales were > 0.6, more than the recommended value of 0.6. For each of the scales, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant; ethnic identification ($\chi^2(21) = 3818.42, p < .05$), co-worker social support ($\chi^2(10) = 1727.45, p < .05$), employee self-efficacy ($\chi^2(136) = 10227.40, p < .05$), organisational self-identity ($\chi^2(10) = 2336.41, p < .05$) and employee voice ($\chi^2(3) = 1155.97, p < .05$).

Determination of model validity

In addition to the above analysis that confirms that the model is adequate, discussions in this section aims to ascertain the extent to which the items used represent the unobservable variables in the construct (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). The questionnaire sent to respondent are made up of statements that should collectively represent the variables in the theoretical framework. Two methods utilised in this study that is frequently used to determine construct validity are; average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability index (CRI) (Hair et al., 2012). The rule of thumb is for AVE results to be ≥ 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The minimum value generally accepted for a reliable construct is $CRI \geq 0.70$ (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The values of coefficient of Cronbach alpha, AVE and CRI for the variables ranged from 0.70 to 0.91, thus confirming the validity of the constructs used in the analysis. Table 1 shows the values of AVE and CRI, thus confirming the validity of the constructs used in the analysis.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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As this study utilises a cross-sectional data collection approach, care was taken to control for method bias. Procedures suggested by Podsakoff et al., (2003) was used. First, questionnaire design guaranteed participants anonymity. Second, improvement of the questionnaire by providing explanation for the scale on a visible section at the top of each page of the survey. By anonymising questionnaire, the questionnaire, this reduced participants evaluation apprehension.

The results from a correlation analysis among variables show that Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the constructs were acceptable with values greater 0.70 (Olckers & Zyl, 2016). See Table 2. The correlation coefficients of some variables were strong. Thus, a multicollinearity analysis was done and reported the following variance inflation factors (VIF); ethnic identification 1.660, employee

self-efficacy 1.148, organisational self-identity 1.763 and employee voice 1.748. A VIF value lower than 3 suggest that there is no multicollinearity error.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Controlling for the effects of participants' state of origin

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated for each of the main variables in relation to participants' state of origin. The results were significant for each variable with native employees showing higher values as follows; ethnic identification, $F(4, 1521) = 25.98, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$. Native employees showed higher perception of ethnic identification ($M = 3.99, SD = 0.69$) than non-native employees ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.75$). For co-worker social support, $F(4, 1521) = 19.40, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$. Native employees showed higher perception of co-worker social support ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.71$) than non-native employees ($M = 3.55, SD = 0.77$). For self-efficacy, $F(4, 1521) = 23.97, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$. Native employees showed higher perception of self-efficacy ($M = 3.43, SD = 0.94$) than non-native employees ($M = 2.91, SD = 0.93$). For organisational self-identification, $F(4, 1521) = 8.59, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Native employees showed higher perception of organisational self-identification ($M = 4.0, SD = 0.74$) than non-native employees ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.77$). For employee voice, $F(4, 1521) = 10.87, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Native employees showed higher perception of voice behaviour ($M = 4.13, SD = 0.81$) than non-native employees ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.89$). Although the ANOVA results were significant, the partial Eta squared value for each of the main variables in relation to participants' state of origin was low, suggesting that the variances in the main variables attributable to participants' state of origin effect is large enough to account difference (Richardson, 2011). See Tables 3.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Results from hypothesis testing

The analytical approach uses regression analysis to present findings on how ethnic identification influences employees' sense of organisational solidarity. The mediation analysis was conducted using SPSS (AMOS) software. This result section is divided into two. First, direct relationship between ethnic identification and three-models of organisational solidarity are presented. Second, the paper test for the mediating role of co-worker social support. Investigating the relationships in this order will make it easy to ascertain the mediating effects of co-worker social support (Kenny, 2016). In addition, the indirect effect following the mediation of co-worker social support of ethnic identification on each of the organisational solidarity behaviours are presented.

Direct relationship ethnic identification and organisational solidarity

The following findings are presented in relation to the three-models of OS and employee EI: for efficacy behaviour, the relationship between employee EI and employee efficacy is positive as follows: $\beta = 0.41$, $t(1) = 12.73$, $p < .001$. Secondly, for employee voice behaviour, EI has a positive relationship with the following results: $\beta = 0.53$, $t(1) = 19.86$, $p < .001$. Thirdly, with regards to self-identity behaviour, the regression estimate for EI relationship is positive and significant as follows: $\beta = 0.45$, $t(1) = 18.82$, $p < .001$. See Table 4.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Mediating role of co-worker social support

Upon determining the direct relationship between employee EI and the three-models of OS behaviours, this section provides findings on the mediating role of co-worker social support. Findings show that employees' EI positively influences co-worker social support. The relationship is significant with the following results $\beta = 0.55$, $t(1) = 24.97$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 1 therefore holds. Results also show that the relationship between co-worker social support and OS is significant and positive for all three behaviours; employee self-efficacy: $\beta = 0.33$, $t(2) = 9.09$, $p < .001$, organisational self-identity: $\beta = 0.25$, $t(2) = 9.26$, $p < .001$, employee voice: $\beta = 0.34$, $t(2) = 8.08$, $p < .001$. hypothesis 2 is therefore supported.

The results also show that the introduction of co-worker social support reduced the regression estimates of the relationship between employee EI and three-models of OS behaviours. For example, employee voice: $\beta = 0.39$, $t(2) = 12.74$, $p < .001$. For organisational self-identity: $\beta = 0.31$, $t(2) = 11.32$, $p < .001$. Employee self-efficacy behaviours also reduced as follows: $\beta = 0.23$, $t(2) = 6.11$, $p < .001$. With a p-value less than 0.05 for these relationship, findings show that co-worker social support significant and partially mediates the relationship between employee EI and the three-models of OS behaviours. In view of this result, hypothesis 3 is supported because the introduction of co-worker social support reduced the direct effect of EI on all three behaviours of OS. See Table 5. The mediation model is a good fit for the data with CMIN/DF, IFI, TLI, CFI and RMSEA values of 4.4, 0.94, 0.93, 0.94 and 0.04 respectively.

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Insert Table 5 and 6 about here

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An advantage of using SPSS (AMOS) software for mediation analysis is that it provides report for the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables following the introduction of a mediation variable. Results show the indirect effects of ethnic identification on

the three OS behaviours as follows: employee voice: $\beta = 0.13$, organisational self-identity: $\beta = 0.14$ and employee self-efficacy: $\beta = 0.18$. To confirm the values of the effect reported in the AMOS analysis, a Sobel test was conducted. Findings from the Sobel test confirmed a significant partial mediation model. The results were similar to the AMOS test. For self-efficacy, the indirect effect was 0.16, $z = 8.5$, $p < .01$. For organisational self-identity, the indirect effect was 0.14, $z = 8.62$, $p < .01$. For employee voice, the indirect effect was 0.13, $z = 7.59$, $p < .01$.

Discussions, contributions and implications

This study contributes to existing organisational theory debates. It provides evidence from an under researched context (Nigeria) to further broaden current generalisations. While extant ethnic diversity studies in Nigeria and other developing context have investigated the implications of fair representation of various ethnic groups as a determinant of society inclusiveness (Adeosun, 2011; Gera, 2016; Oruwari, Owei, & Jev, 2004), this study takes to debate somewhat further by investigating how organisational solidarity is formed in an organisation composed of multi-ethnic employees. In addition to focussing on an organisation, this study considers ethnic diversity from the perspective of an employee's identification with their ethnicity.

Beyond making contributions from a developing context, the contributions from this study has provided theory to explain the relationship between EI and OS. OS as a construct has not been widely investigated in organisational theory literature. The few studies that have examined its emergence have measured it have used it interchangeably with organisational identification (Moskovich, 2016) and horizontal co-operative behaviour (Sanders & Schyns, 2006). However, a PCA results from this study breaks down the construct to show OS as a composite construct that manifests through employee behaviours of self-efficacy, voice and organisational identification. This discovery is new and shows how important the OS as a construct is.

The advantage of investigating OS as conceptualised in this study is that it allows for a determination of how each of its components related with EI. The results show that while the three-

model behaviours of OS are positively and significantly influenced EI, employee self-efficacy behaviour ranks lowest. This finding is novel and adds to the knowledge on the investigation of OS. The implication of this may be that while EI influences an employee's perception of solidarity generally, ability to get work done may require other stressors such as skills and knowledge.

This study has significant implications for organisations, especially bureaucracies. Although, bureaucracies by their structure often have employees that are representative of the society they operate in, there exists a lack of attention to the implications of ethnicity for employees' sense of solidarity. Also, having employees that are representative of the various regions at work has been linked to many challenges in public sector organisations such as discrimination (Andrews et al., 2014), clash between society-wide goals and employees' own regional goals (Gera, 2016; Grissom et al., 2009). The hypothesis addressing the mediating effect of co-worker social support on EI-OS relationship is was supported. This result echoes the importance of creating an organisational climate that allows employees to freely interact. This present study argues that employees' view of their organisation is premised on how well they relate with their co-workers. Positive co-worker relationship may reduce ethnicity based biases among employees that are linked to their societal difference (Chughtai, 2016).

Investigating how to influence OS among employees working in public sector organisations within the empirical context of the study is apt. In Nigeria, there is a sense of entitlement towards government organisations (Musa, 2015; Ukiwo, 2005). The notion is that government belongs to everyone and as such, the struggle by the federating states and LGAs to have employee quotas in government bureaucracies (Adeosun, 2011; Kendhammer, 2014). Thus, employees in the country unintentionally show solidarity towards their ethnic group with feelings and actions in most instances geared towards improving the lots of their regions (Oruwari, Owei, & Jev, 2004; Welbourne et al., 2015). This study suggests that organisations create an atmosphere that

welcomes employees with such strong EI as this may result to co-worker social support, and transfer individual/ethnic solidarity to the OS.

Admittedly, while the conclusions of this exploratory study are speculative and will require much more evidence to explain the rationale for outcomes of the results, it has provided new reasoning on the effect of EI on employees' sense of OS in the public sector. As public-sector organisations are unable to introduce extra financial incentives that may be utilised by their peers in the private sector, public sector managers are encouraged to ensure that employees are treated fairly irrespective of their ethnicity. They are also encouraged to include cosmopolitan behaviour in their appraisal systems and reward employees for adhering to them.

The findings presented in this paper is not without some limitation. For example, as psychological behaviours may be influenced by time, the cross-sectional data approach used for this study makes it's a limitation. However, findings from a multicollinearity analysis show that the relationship reported among variables were not affected by multicollinearity error. Additionally, the context wherein the study was conducted is highly collectivist, and people attach much importance to ethnic identification in terms of location (state or LGA of origin) (Oruwari et al., 2004). However, if similar studies are conducted using the region to delimitate ethnicity in another location such as, Western countries with less collectivist ideology, the results may be different. Such limitation does not fault the findings from this study especially because of the methodological rigour underpinning the results. Future studies are solicited from a different context to enable comparison of outcome, and to make inferences on the effect of context.

In conclusion, this paper makes the case for public administration scholars and practitioners to pay attention to creating an inclusive climate. The results show that co-worker social support is the mechanism through which EI may shift toward OS. It highlights the importance of relationships among employees at the group or departmental levels. The result has shown that it is worthwhile to examine how the strength of EI influences employees' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

As the call for representation of various ethnic groups at work continues to grow, scholars and practitioners must continue to investigate several ways of influencing employees' behaviours that favour the organisation and ensure that discriminations associated with multi ethnic settings are mitigated.

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Table 1

Construct validity

Items	Cronbach alpha	AVE	CRI
Employee self-efficacy	0.91	0.64	0.92
Organisational self-identity	0.80	0.70	0.87
Employee voice	0.73	0.82	0.90
Co-worker social support	0.75	0.55	0.83
Ethnic identification	0.84	0.63	0.87

AVE-Average variance extracted, CRI- Critical reliability index

Table2

Descriptive statistics and correlation of model variables

Model Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach alpha (α)	No of items	Ethnic identification	Co-worker social support	Employee self-efficacy	Organisational self-identity	Employee voice
Ethnic identification	3.879	0.727	0.844	7		1			
Co-worker social support	3.807	0.744	0.745	5	.539**	1			
Employee self-efficacy	3.284	0.962	0.912	11	.310**	.349**	1		
Organisational self-identity	3.937	0.754	0.798	5	.435**	.409**	.285**	1	
Employee voice	4.047	0.843	0.734	3	.454**	.397**	.267**	.615**	1

Table 3

Analysis of variance

Test Between-Subjects effects for main variables in relation to state of origin

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ethnic identification	51.52	4	12.88	25.98	0	0.06
Error	753.5	1521	0.5			
Co-worker social support	40.94	4	10.24	19.4	0	0.05
Error	802.14	1521	0.53			
Employee self-efficacy	83.77	4	20.94	23.97	0	0.06
Error	1327.89	1521	0.87			
Organisational self-identity	19.17	4	4.79	8.59	0	0.02
Error	847.7	1521	0.56			
Employee voice	30.11	4	7.53	10.87	0	0.03
Error	1051.99	1521	0.69			

Table 4

Direct relationship model

Relationship between variables			β	S.E.	C.R.
Employee Self-efficacy	-	Employee ethnic identity	0.41	0.03	12.73
Organisational self-identity	-	Employee ethnic identity	0.45	0.02	18.82
Employee voice	-	Employee ethnic identity	0.53	0.02	19.86

Table 5

Indirect relationship (mediating role of co-worker social support)

Relationship between variables		β	S.E.	C.R.	Sig
Co-worker social support	<--- Employee ethnic identity	0.55	0.02	24.97	.001
Employee Self-efficacy	<--- Employee ethnic identity	0.23	0.04	6.11	.001
Employee voice	<--- Employee ethnic identity	0.39	0.03	12.74	.001
Organisational self-identity	<--- Employee ethnic identity	0.31	0.03	11.32	.001
Employee Self-efficacy	<--- Co-worker social support	0.33	0.04	9.09	.001
Organisational self-identity	<--- Co-worker social support	0.25	0.03	9.26	.001
Employee voice	<--- Co-worker social support	0.24	0.03	8.08	.001

Figure 1

Framework for linking ethnic identification to organisational solidarity

