# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The issue of employees' engagement has been a serious source of concern in United Nations development programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria. The organization as well as other related institutions is faced with the problems of job engagement, autonomy to work independently, provisions of reward and recognition systems as well as the provision of inclusive work environment opportunities to employees. These conditions gave rise to the emergence of unsuitable employees with lack of the needed requisite skills to pilot the affair of the entity. A condition which has direct bearing in employee performance in the organization. The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of employee engagement on the performance of employees in United Nations Development Programme, Abuja, Nigeria. The survey research design was used in the study and data was collected from primary source with the use of questionnaire. The study population consists of about 251 employees of UNDP, Abuja, which was adopted as the sample size for the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used for data analyses through simple percentage, and mean method. The ordinary Least Square regression method was used to test the formulated hypotheses. The findings show that there is a significance relationship between employees' engagement and employees' performance in United Nations Development programme (UNDP), Abuja. The study concluded that autonomy to work independently has a positive significance relationship with employee performance in UNDP, Abuja. It was recommended that the management of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria should establish a work inclusive policy which would give guidelines to all stakeholders on how employee engagement will be implemented to foster management commitment toward enhancing employee job satisfaction.

**Keys words:** Employee autonomy, inclusive work environment, job satisfaction and employee commitment.

#### INTRODUCTION

The competitive nature of doing business in the contemporary world demand for engagement of skillful and competence workforce to handles the affairs of organizations (Haward, 2019). Similarly, organizations are now providing their employee with work autonomy so as to work independently to encourage job satisfaction and commitment (Henry, 2019). This expressed the fact that inclusive work environment is a

determinant factor in motivating employee job commitment. Henry Further state that companies are now using reward and recognition systems to boost employee morale, which goes a long way in bringing out the best optimal job performance of employee and as such, led to job satisfaction.

These developments depict the fact that organizations are in the forefront of engaging the most suitable workforce to be part of their team. This is believed from the perspectives that

credible employees are veritable source of assets to a business undertaken. This account for significant shift in the desires of industries to hired or employed the most suitable team of workforce with the needed requisite skills to pilot the affair of the business at any given time (Levine & Crom, 2021). In all of these, it is wordy of note that engaging the right calibers of employees is a determinant factor capable of improving employee level of service excellent significantly according to (Haward, 2019).

More so, the performance of employees in an organization as regards commitment to work, job satisfaction and morale could go a long way in determining the overall performance of the organization. Most employees of an organization could ascribe their commitment to work, job satisfaction and morale to the employee's autonomy to work independently, recognition system and inclusive work environment in the organization because these are key factors that show whether employees feel invested in, motivated by and passionate about their jobs (Stogdill, 2017).

The employees of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja recognized the fact that the degree to which employees feel invested in, motivated by and passionate about their jobs in the organization is very low and this is seen in the employee's commitment to work, morale as well as satisfaction with the job. Employees may set aside their creativity and commitment where they feel the organization does not value their contribution.

The degree to which employees feel invested in, motivated by and passionate about their jobs could pose threat or opportunities to that organization (Levine &Crom, 2021). The issue of employee's engagement to work with high level of dedication and commitment independently and inclusive work environment in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja has lingered as far as the inception of the organization in Nigeria. Most employees of the organization have ascribed their low commitment to work arising from lack of job satisfaction. Conditions which gave rise to low morale as a result of the lack of autonomy to work independently. The above factors depict the fact that UNDP has poor reward and recognition system and also failed to provide inclusive work environment capable of motivating greater employee performance.

The management of the organization on the other hand has argued that in a dynamic and unpredictable environment, engaging the requisite employees that are ready to adhered strictly to the organization norms and culture are in the best position to work in alignment toward the actualization of the organization stated goals and objectives (Adiniji, 2024). Similarly, this implies that giving employees' autonomy to work independently is an invitation to empowering employees to become unaccountable, which could then affect the organization's overall performance.

This implies that employee autonomy set in if management of organization allows employees to take responsibilities on their own without thorough supervision or order. Too much decentralization of power or authorities gave the employee veto power to operate beyond control limit. This is why the organization's environment is highly structured to the point of being rigid, such that employees are not even given a voice in the organization's matters. All of these are said to have adverse or positive effect in employee performance generally (Adiniji, 2024). It is on this premise that this research is designed to investigate the impact of employee engagement on the performance of employees in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of employee engagement on the performance of employees in United Nations Development Programme, Abuja, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- 1. examine the impact of employee's engagement on employee's job satisfaction in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria.
- 2. assess the influence of employee's engagement on employee's commitment to work in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria

3. identify the impact of employee's engagement on employees' morale in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria.

#### LITERATURE REVIEWS

# **Concept of Employment Engagement**

Employee engagement describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward their job. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive and higher performing. Employee engagement is a human resources (HR) concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward their job. Engaged employees care about their work and about the performance of the company, and feel that their efforts make a difference. Employee engagement can be critical to a company's success, given its links to job satisfaction and employee morale (Adiniyi, 2024). An engaged employee is in it for more than a paycheck and may consider their well-being linked to their performance, and thus instrumental to their company's success (Paige, M, 2021).

Arising from the above definition of engagement, it can be deduced that employee engagement has to deals with the extent of commitment and work exposure an employee feels toward their job (Aisha & Abdullahi, 2024). This therefore simply means that employee engagement has direct bearing with employee autonomy because, if workers are allowed to handles job specifications and responsibilities on their own without too much interference of higher authorities, then employee autonomy has said to have set in. This simply means that when employees get the freedom to work in their own way, they become motivated to work well. They want to show what they are capable of, and engagement levels naturally rise. A refectory study shows that 79% of autonomous employees are more engaged than employees who lack autonomy (Howard, 2022).

Job autonomy means employees have some level of control over how they get work done, such as how they accomplish tasks, set deadlines, and where or when they work. A workplace can be "flexible" without actually granting worker autonomy (Jones, 2023). It is worthy of note from this that a work place where individual employee is granted autonomy, work seems to be more friendly for employee, and this result to greater performance at the long-run. Job autonomy means employees have some level of control over how they get work done, such as how they accomplish tasks, set deadlines, and where or when they work. A workplace can be "flexible" without actually granting worker autonomy (Jones, 2023).

Organizations with high levels of employee engagement are more profitable and have higher customer satisfaction ratings than ones with low engagement levels, according to <u>Gallup</u> and other researchers like Howard (2019). This research also shows that successful engagement efforts lead to less absenteeism and turnover. In a competitive hiring market, engaged staff members who feel they have good work-life balance and high levels of employee satisfaction are also less likely to look elsewhere for employment (Darling & Leffel, 2020).

Employee engagement can be physical, emotional, and/or cognitive (Fiedler & House, 2018). Physical engagement is based on the amount of exertion an employee puts into their job. Physically engaged employees view work as a source of energy. Emotionally engaged employees have a positive job outlook and are passionate about their work (Lawal & Abdullahi, 2024). Whatever the source, engaged employees feel connected to their work because they can relate to, and are committed to, and they also see how they contribute to the overall success and mission of the organization (Kirkpatrick & Locke 2019). They further asserted that giving team members the opportunity to work autonomously may improve their productivity by allowing them to complete tasks as soon as they are ready to, instead of waiting for specific directions.

Employee engagement is enhanced through rewards and recognition. This buttress the fact that both are tools that can be used to motivate employees and improve their performance. Rewards can include things such as bonuses, raises, or special privileges, while recognition can come in the form of words of appreciation or

awards (Avolio, Waldman, & Einstein 2018). When used effectively, rewards and recognition can help to create a positive work environment and increase employee satisfaction. They can also help to boost morale and encourage employees to work harder and achieve better results.

It can be deduced from the above foregoing that in an inclusive environment, people of all cultural orientations can freely express who they are, their own opinions and points of view. They can fully participate in teaching, learning, work and social activities. They feel safe from abuse, harassment or unfair criticism and so on.

### **Concept of Employee Performance**

Employee performance is defined as how well a person executes their job duties and responsibilities. Many companies assess their employees' performance on an annual or quarterly basis to define certain areas that need improvement and to encourage further success in areas that are meeting or exceeding expectations (Litmus, 2019).

Kirkpatrick and Locke (2019), states that employees performance refers to an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute to the organization's technical core. Employees are performing different jobs in an organization depending upon the nature of the organization. Employee in most organizations mainly perform tasks like production, storage, manufacturing, marketing, transportation, purchasing, distribution, promotion of business, finance and accounting, human resource, research and public relations among others (Nnajiofor et al., 2024). All these activities are interrelated to achieve the targets. These are to be performed by the employees properly so they can give their best output at the job.

Employee performance will have great impact on the total production, sales, profit, progress and market position of the company in the market, that is why the work their job security should be conducive. Various factors like skills, training, motivation, dedication, welfare, management policies, fringe benefits, salary and packages, promotion, communication etc. are responsible to encourage the people to work sincerely and give their best output.

Job satisfaction is the extent at which employees gained a comfortable condition of service arising from the work he or she is doing (Nuhu, 2020). The researcher went furthermore to said that, improving the intrinsic job characteristics at your workplace as much as possible would help improve employees work attitude. Numerous studies have shown that employees rate the nature of the work as the major criteria in job satisfaction.

Therefore, it is important that employers make the work itself as interesting and challenging as possible. This is obviously easier to accomplish in some workplaces than others, but all employers can take some steps to give employees input or more responsibilities for work flow processes to keep them intellectually and emotionally engaged.

Nuhu (2020) defined employee commitment as the degree to which the employee feels devoted to their organization. From the above definition, it can be inferred that, employee commitment seems to be a crucial factor in achieving organizational success. Individuals with low levels of commitment will do little enough to work by. They do not put their hearts into the work and mission of the organization. They seem to be more concerned with personal success than with the success of the organization as a whole.

Henry (2019), defined employee morale as the job satisfaction, outlook, and feelings of wellbeing an employee has a workplace setting. Proven to have a direct effect on employees' performance, it is one of the corner stone's of business (Bretz, Milkovich & Read 2019). Recognized as one of the major factors affecting employees' performance and overall financial stability of any business, low morale may lead to reduced concentration. which in turn can cause mistakes, poor customer service and missed deadlines. It also can contribute to high turnover a rate and absenteeism.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

# William Kahn's Theory of Employee Engagement-1990

Kahn was one of the original theorists of employee engagement, describing it as 'harnessing organization members' selves to their work roles'. The focus of this theory is bringing the entirety of a member of staff into the workplace rather than an organization only benefiting from certain attributes that an employee has. This includes:

Meaningfulness: This refers to how much an employee understands the meaning of their work. The more an employee understands the benefit of their work, the more invested they are in the process.

Safety: This refers to how safe an employee feels in the workplace, both psychologically and physically, including the treatment they receive from managerial staff and colleagues.

Availability: This refers to how available for work a member of staff is. This goes beyond time constraints and includes factoring in the psychological and physical limits that an employee may have. Kahn's theories have the logical conclusion of using a more cohesive strategy in the workplace as a means of increasing employee engagement. While short-term motivation generators such as inspiring meetings and events in the workplace may help, making structural adjustments and transitions in the organization means that the company becomes a better place on a day-to-day basis (Adiniyi, 2024). Employee engagement is consistently higher, and the organization benefits from staff members working at a higher standard without any concerns.

This study adopted the William Kahn theory of employee engagement because the theory focused on bringing the entirety of a member of staff into the workplace rather than an organization only benefiting from certain attributes that an employee has. In this theory, the more an employee is engaged or carried along, the more he or she understands the meaning of their work. The more an employee understands the benefit of their work, the more invested they

are in the process. This theory therefore admonishes that the logical conclusion of using a more cohesive strategy in the workplace as a means of increasing employee engagement means that employees are given vital roles to play in the organization.

# **Empirical Review**

Ekpenyong (2020), investigated the impact of engagement employee employee's performance in a business organization: a case study of guarantee trust bank plc, Abuja. A descriptive survey was used in which 60 questionnaires were collected from 100 questionnaires distributed. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Regression analysis and Pearson correlation were used to measure the correlation and the hypothesis of the research. The research findings show that there is negative relationship between employees' engagement and employees performance. This research also shows that successful engagement efforts lead to less absenteeism and turnover. In a competitive hiring market, engaged staff members who feel they have good work-life balance and high levels of employee satisfaction are also less likely to look elsewhere for employment (Darling &Leffel, 2020). This demonstrate the fact that employee engagement led to less absenteeism of workers and as such, its adoption is very instrumental to successful better performance as evidenced in this finding.

Cognitively engaged employees devote more attention to their work and are absorbed in their job (Henry, 2019). Whatever the source, engaged employees feel connected to their work because they can relate to, and are committed to, and they also see how they contribute to the overall success and mission of the organization (Kirkpatrick & Locke 2019). They further asserted that giving team members the opportunity to work autonomously may improve their productivity by allowing them to complete tasks as soon as they are ready to, instead of waiting for specific directions.

Muhammad (2018), investigated the relationship between employee's engagement and employee's performance. Empirical evidence from Pakistani banks. Findings of this study reveal that there significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee's performance. Daniel and Josse (2017) examined the influence of employee's engagement on Employees' Performance: A Study of Turkana County, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed method approach and employs an exploratory survey design. The study revealed that there is relationship between employee's engagement and employee's performance.

Molyko (2019) examined the effects of employees' engagement employee's on performance: the case of Kajepi Print Ltd, Cameroun. Findings revealed that there is positive relationship between emplovee's engagement and employee's performance in Kajepi Print Ltd, Cameroun. Many studies have been carried out on employees' engagement and its impact on employee performance in developed countries but very few studies regarding employees' engagement and its impact on employee performance have been carried out in developing countries like Nigeria. This study is carried out in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nigeria to bridge that gap.

# **METHODOLOGY**

The Survey research design was used for this study. The population for the study was two hundred and fifty-one (251) employees drawn from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, Nigeria office. This population comprises of Senior Management team, Operation unit, Programme unit, Security unit, and Clinic/ Hospital unit respectively. Questionnaires were used as primary source and means of data collection instrument in eliciting

data from employees of UNDP, Abuja, Nigeria. Hence, the population size is minimal; it was equally adopted as the study sample size using census techniques. This became necessary hence the population size was relatively small.

The descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze data with the help of statistical packages for social science (SPSS version 23.0). The descriptive statistic used comprises of simple percentage, and means to analyze data. While the Inferential statistic adopted to test the formulated hypotheses is the Ordinary Least Square regression technique was done to assess the relationship between employee's engagement and employee's performance in UNDP, Abuja, Nigeria. The study's variables have a structural model that addresses the two main variables in the study, which were the independent and dependent variables.

The study focused on autonomy to work independently, reward and recognition system as well as inclusive work environment as the proxies of the independent variable (i.e. employees' engagement) and employees' job satisfaction, employee's commitment to work, as well as employees' morale as the proxies for the dependent variable (i.e. employees' performance) and are expressed as shown below:

Where:

EJS = Employee Job Satisfaction, ECW = Employee Commitment to Work

EM = Employee Morale, AWI = Autonomy to Work Independently

RRS = Reward and Recognition System, IWE= Inclusive Work Environment.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

## **Test of Hypothesis One**

Employee's engagement has no significant effect on employee's job satisfaction in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja.

Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

			Adjusted R	Std. Error of the	
Model	R	R Square	Square	Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.961ª	.932	.931	.57080	.121

a. Predictors: (Constant), EAWI, ERRS, EIWE

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Job Satisfaction score

Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.567	.102		16.678	.000
	AWI	.325	.037	.346	10.478	.000
	RRS	.057	.101	.101	.789	.236
	IWE	.342	.119	.234	.123	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Job Satisfaction score

Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

From the result shown above in hypothesis one, the analysis indicated that there is a significant relationship between Employee Engagement and employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja at (R = .961, B = 1.567, t = 16.678, Sig = .000P<.05). This result shows that when employees are carried along or engaged adequately with the happenings in the organization, it helps to increase their performance in the organization. It

was equally revealed in the result that employee job satisfaction has a positive strong significant relationship with autonomy to work independently in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja at (B = .325, t = 10.478, Sig = .000P < .05). This indicates that when employees are given the autonomy to work independently in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, there is an increase in employee job satisfaction.

### Test of Hypothesis Two

Employee's engagement has no significant effect on employee's commitment to work in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja

Model Summary

			Adjusted F	Std. Error of
Model	R	R Square	Square	the Estimate
1	.944a	.911	.911	.45367

a. Predictors: (Constant), EAWI, ERRS, EIWE

b. Dependent Variable: Employees Commitment to Work

Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.525	.120		4.323	.000
	AWI	.567	.043	.637	7.226	.000
	RRS	.453	.022	.765	12.067	.000
	IWE	.165	.021	.430	5.675	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Commitment to Workscore Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

Hypothesis two above shows a significant relationship between employee engagement and employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja at (R =.944, B = .525, t = 4.323, Sig = .000P < .05). This reveals that when employees are engaged through autonomy to work independently, employee's commitment to work increases (B = .567) in **Nations** Development United Programme (UNDP), Abuja. It was also shown that there was a significant relationship between autonomy to work independently and employee commitment to work in United Nations Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja at (B = .567, t = 7.226, Sig = .000P < .05). This indicates that when employees are given the autonomy to work independently in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja, there is an increase in their commitment to work.

## Test of Hypothesis Three

Employee's engagement has no significant effect on employee's morale in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja.

			Adjusted R	Std. Error of	Durbin-
Model	R	R Square	Square	the Estimate	Watson
1	.922a	.889	.889	1.65112	.062

- a. Predictors: (Constant), EAWI, ERRS, EIWE
- b. Dependent Variable: Employees Commitment to Work

Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

				Standardized Coefficients		
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.407	.301		1.643	.138
	AWI	.529	.101	.232	3.951	.000
	RRS	.077	.198	.023	.434	.839
	IWE	1.163	.230	.689	5.518	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Moralescore

Source: Data Output Using SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23)

From the result in hypothesis three, there was a significant relationship between employee engagement and employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

Abuja at (R = .922, B = .407, t = 1.643, Sig = .138P < .05). This indicates that when employees are engaged, employee's morale increases. It also shows that when employees are given the

autonomy to work independently, their morale to work increases at (B = .529, t = 3.951, Sig = .000P<.05). Also, there was a significant relationship between reward and recognition system and employee morale at (B = .077, t = .434, Sig = .000P<.05). This result shows that as employees are rewarded and recognized, there is a corresponding increase in employee morale in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The results of the analysis indicate that there is a positive significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja and this finding is in line with the findings of Molyko (2019) and Daniel & Josse (2017) that equally found a positive significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee performance. The finding is not in line with the findings of Ekpenyong (2020) and Muhammad & Peter (2018) because it found a negative significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee performance.

From the analysis, the study found out that there is a positive significant relationship between employee engagement and employees job satisfaction in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. This finding is in line with the findings of Hayward & Pearse (2019) and Emolero, Cuadrado, Navas& Morales (2017), which found a positive significant relationship between employees' engagement and employees' job satisfaction. However, the findings is not in line with the findings of Fiedler & House (2018) and Micali (2018), which found a negative significant relationship between employees' engagement and employees' job satisfaction.

The finding of this research question is in line with the William Kahn theory of employee engagement focuses on bringing the entirety of a member of staff into the workplace rather than an organisation only benefiting from certain attributes that an employee has. From the analysis, the study found out that there is a positive significant relationship between

employee engagement and employees commitment to work in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. This finding is in line with the findings of Celestine (2018), and Nokwanda, Nishika& Anis (2022), which found a positive significant relationship between employees' engagement and employees' commitment to work. However, the findings are not in line with the findings of Santos (2017), and Paracha, Qamar, & Waqas (2017), which found a negative significant relationship between employees' engagement and employees commitment to work.

The finding of this research question is in line with the Maslow's theory of employee engagement posits that fulfilling each of the five basic human needs – physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization – leads to higher employee engagement and motivation.

From the analysis, the study found out that there is a positive significant relationship between employee engagement and employee morale in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. This finding is in line with the findings of Rollinson (2019), and Shafie and Barghi (2023), which found a positive significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee morale. However, the finding is not in line with the findings of Javidan, & Waldman (2013), and Nicole, (2021), which found a negative significant relationship between employees' engagement and employee morale.

The finding of this research question is in line with the Maslow's theory of employee engagement posits that fulfilling each of the five basic human needs – physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization – leads to higher employee engagement and morale.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that autonomy to work independently has a relationship with employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. When employees

are given the autonomy to work independently, the feel less monitored and would do everything to ensure that they perform very well at work. Reward and recognition system also influence employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. This study concludes that when employees are recognized and rewarded for their efforts at work, their performance at work would improve. Inclusive work environment also has a positive relationship with employee performance in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja. This shows that if the management provides an inclusive work environment, employees feel a sense of belonging and as such they would everything possible to work harder to improve their performance at work. The study recommends the following based on the findings and in line with the objectives of the study:

- 1. The management of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja should establish a work inclusive policy which would give guidelines to all stakeholders on how employee engagement will be implemented and as such will indicate the management's commitment toward employee job satisfaction.
- 2. Management of United **Nations** Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja should develop a good reward and recognition system; this increases the employee's commitment to work and facilitates them to do their work effectively and efficiently. The management should also develop good relationship among employees through which commitment to work is enhanced, as a result, employees' work performance will be at high level.
- 3. The management of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Abuja should establish autonomy to work independently policy which would give guidelines on how employees would be supervised and monitored while at work. Employees' morale would be improved when they understand and equally know that there is no stringent supervisory

system that wouldn't allow them to exercise their potential.

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