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Wage Differentials and Employees' Work Relationship in ALMACO Construction Company, Aba, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study explores how employees' working relationships in ALMACO Construction Company in Aba, Nigeria are affected by wage disparities. The study, which was based on social exchange theory and equity theory, tried to establish how differences in pays have an effect on the teamwork, communication, and employees' morale. Structured questionnaires were given to the cross-section of employees in each department as strategy of quantitative research. For the study, both inferential and descriptive statistical tools utilised so as to analyse the gotten data. Linear regression was adopted to test the hypotheses. The findings specify that salary differences have considerable impact on how co-employees relate with one another, which logically bring about lessened employees' morale, minimize collaboration, and unappreciable communication. Salary inequalities seemingly have been discovered to wane trust and exacerbate conflict in the organization. The study makes a conclusion that performance-based and transparent compensation plans necessities for the encouragement of hearty working relations. Consistent payment audits, free channels of communication, and workers' inclusion in pay-related resolution are therefore recommended.

Keywords: Compensation Structure; Employee Relationships; Wage Differentials; Workplace Morale, and Human Resource Management.

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Introduction

In the current world of work, management of wages is a great challenge in human resource management, most especially in countries known for underdevelopment where there are weak labour market regulations. Pay dissimilarities are experienced when employees having similar roles or qualifications are unequally compensated. These inequalities are predominantly frequent in labour-intensive sectors such as construction, where they may go beyond experience and education to comprise management discretion, favouritism, and unequal bargaining power (Adewale, 2020; Eze, 2022; National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). These differences serve in perpetuating larger socioeconomic injustices, and as well lower worker morale and productivity. The non-existence of clear wage structures and informal employment activities normally offer a colossal deal of discretion in setting wages, regularly to the prejudice of migrant or low-skilled workers (ILO, 2021; Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023). Furthermore, these problems are aggravated by the absence of efficient grievance procedures and trade union partaking, which limits employees' capability in bargaining for just recompense (World Bank, 2022; Umeh, 2021). So, in a view to address wage discrepancies in these situations, legislative reform and institutional consolidation are jointly necessary to encourage fair wage-setting and methods.

Industry such as construction in Nigeria, affords a pertinent framework for exploring pay discrepancies for the reason that it engages an expanded workforce that are made up of engineers, semi-skilled workers, and casual labourers (Okolie & Ezeokonkwo, 2021). Greater than 50% of construction staff members in the private sector are not satisfied with their earnings, occasioned by feelings of injustice and a non-transparency (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Current labour surveys confirmed that knowledgeable construction workers collect around ₦75,000 monthly, while casual workers stereotypically earn less than ₦30,000, which is meaningfully lesser than the national minimum living wage of ₦70,000 (Salary Explorer. (2024); Guardian Nigeria, 2024). This great salary difference is worsened by the fact that roughly 65% of employees in the sector do not have formal contracts, restraining their negotiating leverage and access to benefits. This discontent is capable of reducing output, heighten turnover of staff, and bring about compromising of project worth. These challenges are best demonstrated by the case of ALMACO Construction Company in Aba, Abia State, where staff members have voiced out worries over pay inequalities between field personnel and site managers, as well as contract and permanent workforce (KenInfo, 2023). Such variances do not only show unsatisfactory payment practices, but also accentuate the critical need for labour improvement and solider implementation of hiring guidelines in the business.

Both Social Exchange Theory and Equity Theory help as the underpinning for this study. Workers gage impartiality by contrasting their roles and rewards with those of colleagues. This is in accordance to equity theory. The give and take character of links between employers and workers is underscored by social exchange theory. These backgrounds make it easier in comprehending how supposed pay discrepancies can weaken communication, cooperation, and trust all of which are vital for a project's feat. The location of Aba, Abia State, is noteworthy for this study. The city's construction industry has advanced speedily, and its labour force is assorted in terms of socioeconomic setting. As a result of these factors, it is a seamless place to explore the effects of pay inequality. In a situation where labour forces believe that their remunerations are indiscriminate or undeserved, it can lead to skirmish and corrode teamwork, which will eventually impact project quality (Yusuf & Aina, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

In non-governmental sector in Nigeria, where structures of remuneration are continually unpredictable and are not reformable, wage gaps are a repeated issue. The subsistence of a number of hiring groupings, the project-based work nature, and the prevalent employment of informal reimbursement practices are among the elements that worsen this delinquent in the construction industry (Eze, 2022). These situations aggravate apparent wage disproportions, which could make relationships in the workplace to be eroded and lessen the morale of employees. In relations to initial data, ALMACO Construction Company's reward incongruities may be a factor in rise of interpersonal crisis and reduction in the satisfaction of employees. With reference to Ogunyomi and Bruning (2016), workforces who consider their pay to be biased in contrast to their counterparts have high tendency to reject cooperation, suppress information, and once a while engross in open hostility. Such attitude is chiefly disadvantageous in construction projects, where apt achievement hinges on continuous coordination across numerous professional sets.

Utmost research on wage differentials in the country is directed toward macro-level scrutiny of labour market inequality or the connexion between productivity and reward (Jimoh, 2022; Yusuf & Aina, 2019). Few studies, however, have explored how pay disparities influence interpersonal dynamics within organizations, particularly in the construction sector. This gap is expressly noticeable in southeastern Nigeria, where quick expansion and substructure advance have prompted evolution in construction activity deprived of a corresponding concentration on the issues in human resource management.

This study addresses quite a few important gaps in the literature. In the first case, while prior study has ascertained wide ranged relations between wage inequality and organizational outcomes, there is incomplete perception of the mechanisms through which reward variances affect relationships of the place of work in construction settings. Also, larger percent of the available studies have concentrated on southwestern Nigeria, leaving regional dissimilarities principally unexplored (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). More also, limited studies have utilised organizational theories such as Equity Theory and Social Exchange Theory to investigate payment challenges in Nigeria's construction industry.

The study is timely given the rising responsibility of the construction industry in Nigeria's economic development plan. As the government gives precedence to the enlargement of infrastructure so as to support economic divergence, addressing human resource problems in the sector is now turning into increase importance. Examining the

ALMACO Construction Company, this study seeks out to proffer real-world understandings for establishments focusing on designing impartial payment systems that encourage both performance and positive workplace relationships. The results are projected to heighten understanding of payment dynamics in Nigeria's construction industry, proffering direction for human resource professionals and construction supervisors on the lookout for the implementing reasonable and real pay structures in tackling economic conditions.

Objectives of the Study

i. to examine the relationship between wage differentials and employees' morale in ALMACO Construction Company, Aba; and

ii. to determine the effect of wage disparity on team cohesion and communication in ALMACO Construction Company, Aba.

Literature Review and Hypothesis

Concept of Wage Differentials

Differentials in wages denote methodical distinctions in recompense among employees undertaking comparable tasks across places of work, sectors, locations, or even within the same establishment. Researchers naturally differentiate between nominal and real wage differentials. Nominal wage differentials mirror dissimilarities in gross pay without accounting for living costs, while real wage differentials gauge actual acquiring power and consequently offer a more precise replication of equity (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2018; ILO, 2021). In Nigeria, both arrangements are manifest. For instance, workforces in big cities like Lagos, Kano, Kaduna or even Abuja most often obtain more nominal wages than those in smaller cities like Aba, still higher living costs in the former minimized real wage advantages (NBS, 2023). This inconsistency has direct consequences for employees' mobility, satisfaction, and performance, chiefly in the construction industry where cost-of-living changes affect productivity outcomes and job preferences.

Several factors explain wage differentials. Structural determinants include educational qualifications, skills, industry norms, and geographic location, while individual factors include experience and gender. Research shows that workers with higher educational credentials or scarce technical skills tend to command better pay (Adewale, 2020). Experience also contributes to higher wages through enhanced efficiency and reliability. Persistent gender gaps remain a challenge in contexts where cultural norms limit women's labour market opportunities (ILO, 2021). Regionally, workers in urban areas often earn more due to higher operational costs and demand for labour. Wage disparities are also influenced by industry norms; for instance, workers in the oil and gas sector often make significantly more than those in the construction or agricultural sectors, even though their qualifications are comparable (Okolie & Ezeokonkwo, 2021).

In Nigeria, informal employment arrangements, a lack of union participation, and uneven labor law enforcement all contribute to pay discrepancies. In addition to distorting market signals, unequal pay practices damage employee morale and cohesiveness (Eze, 2022; Mugura-Gumeni, 2024; Budiandriani & Fahlevi, 2025).

Wage Structures in the Nigerian Construction Sector

The construction industry's wage structure varies significantly for the reason that the range of livelihoods, which array from architects and engineers to carpenters, bricklayers, and casual workers. Engagement types consist of permanent, contract, and casual work, with compensation often influenced by a mixture of formal scales, informal discussions, and managerial decision. While larger establishment may adopt homogeneous pay systems, small and medium workplaces such as ALMACO Construction Company normally bank on flexible arrangements that foster changeability and perceptions of wrongness (Yusuf & Aina, 2019; Lozano De Alva, 2022).

Puzzlingly, skilled tradespeople in a number of Nigerian construction organizations habitually receive less than administrative staff or recently hired graduates, despite their fundamental task in project implementation (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). Casual staff members are mainly underprivileged as they are excepted from incentives and long-term benefits, contributory to discontent and reduced commitment. These disparities deteriorate morale, hamper cooperation, and lessen project efficiency (Eze, 2022; Ahmad, 2022; Bamberger, 2023). International study gives supports to these findings, indicating that wage dissimilarity weakens collaboration and upsurges skirmish, but Nigerian studies place emphasis on the further effect of unpretentiousness and weak directive (Naidu, 2022; Folger et al., 2024). This encourages that while justice in wages is unanimously imperative, its organizational values may be more tensed in settings such as Nigeria, where construction projects is dependent profoundly on joint effort.

Employees' Work Relationships and Team Dynamics

Work affairs have to do with communication forms, interactive communications, and alliance among labour forces. Teamwork, job happiness, and eventually organizational accomplishment are all suggestively touched by these relationships (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Morrison, 2020). In accordance to Anjum et al. (2018), trust, cooperation, empathy, and emotional intelligence are indispensable elements. Decent working relationships are central in the construction industry for the reason that the high degree of interconnection across activities. While poor relationships generate disruptions, corrode security compliance, and lession output, strong teamwork fosters mutual support and efficiency (Ismail et al., 2020; Salman et al., 2024).

Psychological safety is also promoted by supportive work relationships, which let staff members express problems without worrying about reprisals (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). On the other hand, absenteeism, bullying, and mental health issues can be brought on by toxic relationships that are marked by exclusion, mistrust, and unresolved conflict (Chidiebere & Ugwu, 2021). Consistent with research from Nigeria, income discrepancy impairs these skirmishes through encouragement of enmity and wariness between contemporaries (Yusuf & Aina, 2019). Data from Nigeria designates that informal wage management and casualized labour preparations impair the issue, despite international studies connecting unequal compensation to a lack of collaboration (Okoye & Udo, 2019). Nevertheless, establishment such as ALMACO, casual workers often feel excluded from decision-making and disadvantaged compared to permanent staff, which reduces willingness to collaborate. Therefore, in addition to causing economic injustices, wage differences also cause social disintegration within construction teams.

Organizational Implications of Wage Differentials

Discrepancies in wages have momentous organizational effect as one-sided compensation practices reduces motivation and moral, which in turn minimizes satisfaction of job and discretionary effort (Afolabi et al., 2021). Pay cover-up, which is often used to supress discord, can worsen state of mind about unfairness and encourage inference (Colquitt et al., 2020; Yahaya et al., 2022). On the other hand, fair and open payment policies advance keenness, drive, and output (Greenberg, 2021).

Additional imperative result is turnover. When Nigerian personnel forces consider their salary as undeserved, they tend to leave their jobs (Okorie & Uche, 2022). Results from all over the globe are constant: While current study show that pay disparities undermine trust and cooperation in collaborative work situations, Bloom and Michel (2002) realized that salary discrimination relates to team uncertainty in U.S. enterprises (Kim et al., 2020). As said by Emenike and Okonkwo (2019), wage discrepancies in Nigerian construction organizations declined cooperation and improved unwillingness to support contemporaries, signifying how injustice weakens teamwork.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) are considered as the basis for this study. When labour forces liken their contributions to the organization and earnings to those of their peers, they see equality, which is how equity theory clarifies motivation of workers (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001; Babalola et al., 2022). Teamwork and performance can be poorly affected by seeming wrongness, which has the tendency to create hostility, retreat, or reduce effort. The Social Exchange Theory strong emphasize on trust and mutuality in professional dealings. Labourers are more probable to display allegiance, cooperation, and organizational citizenship where they consider that they are being justly treated, even in terms of compensation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rupp et al., 2018).

Additional current researches establish how present-day compensation policies like pay transparency, and performance-based pay could minimize inequality perception in the place of work and growing economies, even though these theories are vital (Greenberg, 2021; Kim et al., 2020). However, when putting into combination, these theories proffer a context for investigating the ways in which salary modifications impact team dynamics, motivation, and teamwork in construction firms.

Empirical Review, Research Gap, and Hypotheses Development

Study from a form of locations establishes that impartial payment encourages trust and collaboration. Study in organized enterprise narrates a lesser amount of income discrepancy to healthier cooperation (Card et al., 2012), while studies in Scandinavian businesses show that salary equality fosters psychological safety and organizational cohesiveness (Holmas et al., 2020). Similar outcomes have been observed in the UK construction industry, where unbiassed compensation enhanced teamwork and information exchange (Bryson & Forth, 2018). In contrast, study from Nigeria and other nations illustrates how unfavourable wage inequality is. As said by Jimoh (2023) and Pfeffer (2022), discriminations aggravate bitterness and blight output.

Nevertheless, there exist key discrepancies. While international studies often emphasize institutional mechanisms such as unions and collective bargaining to mitigate disparities, Nigerian research stresses the role of informal practices, weak regulation, and managerial discretion as key drivers of inequity (Eze & Okechukwu, 2021; Yusuf & Akanbi, 2020). For example, while Bloom and Michel (2002) associate wage gaps with executive turnover in developed economies, Nigerian studies link them more directly to everyday interpersonal conflict and weakened cooperation among construction teams.

Despite growing scholarship, research on southeastern Nigeria remains limited. Most studies have concentrated on Lagos and other southwestern cities, leaving regional variations underexplored. This study addresses this gap by focusing on Aba, a rapidly urbanizing city where construction activity is expanding but pay practices remain largely informal. It contributes to theory and practice by showing how wage disparities influence employee behaviour, collaboration, and organizational performance in a region with unique socio-economic dynamics.

From this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{01}: Wage differentials have no significant relationship with employee morale in ALMACO Construction Company, Aba, Nigeria.

H_{02}: Wage disparities do not significantly affect teamwork and communication among employees in ALMACO Construction Company, Aba, Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

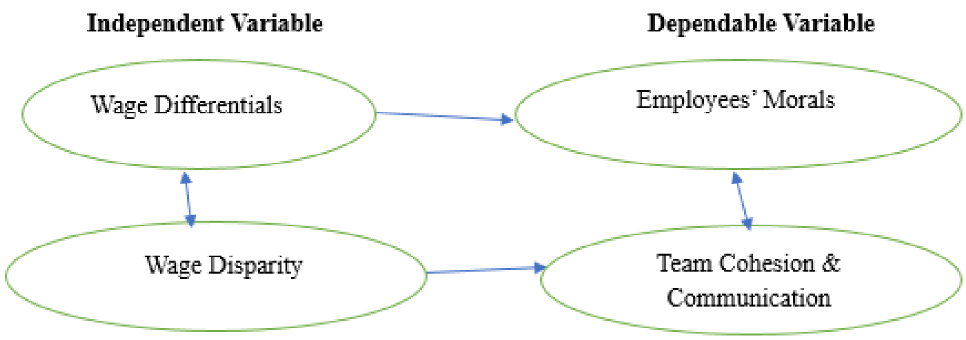

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

This conceptual framework examines the connection between pay disparities and two crucial aspects of employee relationships: team cohesion and communication, as well as employee morale. It maintains that internal compensation compositions have a great influence on interactions in the place of work, with the influence typically being determined by manner by which these salary disparities are seen and operated within the organization. Morale of the employee is the concentration of the initial dimension. Dissatisfaction of employees, a reduction in motivation, and unfriendliness in the place of work are capable of arising at the time that employees have the belief that wage differences are arbitrary or unfair. Conversely, wage differences can heighten a sense of justice and enhance morale through the promotion of merit-based acknowledgement when they are directly and evidently associated with objective values such as experience, performance or job responsibilities.

The effect of discrepancies in salary on team communication and unity is assessed in the section two. Cooperation of co-workers, and camaraderie and trust can all be depressingly impacted by hidden and unjust and inconsistencies in compensation. Contrarywise, impartial pay and value-based practices often inspire cooperation, open communication, and confidence. Considering everything, the framework accentuates how essential it is for organizations to sketch recompense arrangements that strike a balance between performance incentives and equity. Pay inequalities can be an instrument to improve workers' relations and workplace solidity rather than deteriorate them when aptly managed.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey design with a correlational attention on examining how salary disparities impact interpersonal relations among employees in

ALMACO Construction Company, Aba. The descriptive facet centred on the work relations' nature and consciousness of compensation gaps, while the correlational component measured statistical relationship between communication, teamwork, collaboration, and pay disparities. This quantitative approach was suitable for scrutinizing employees' experiences and noticeable patterns (Ghauri et al., 2020), thus, giving room for testing hypothesis and measuring of relationships through correlation and regression analyses (Kline, 2023).

Population of the Study

The target group of the study comprises of all employees in ALMACO Construction Company, which is located in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. The establishment engages a various workforce that consist of both skilled and unskilled labour, with technical specialists (such as artisans and engineers), administrative personnel (such as human resources and accountants), semi-skilled workers (as site managers), and ordinary labourers. These groups signify diverse organizational levels, and each one may have a dissimilar view on and experience with structures of compensation.

In the course of the study, ALMACO Construction Company engaged a roughly 548 people, spread across work divisions and departments. The study adopted a sample-based approach instead of a complete census consequent to the fact that the workforce was manageable in size, The continued representativeness across employment levels and functional positions guaranteed efficient collection of data.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study's sample size was estimated using Yamane's (1967) formula, which works well when the population size is known and limited. A statistically sound basis for sample size selection was given by the formula n=N1+N(e2) n = \frac {N {1 + N(e^2)} n=1+N(e2) N, where n is the sample size, N is the entire population, and e is the margin of error (usually 0.05 for a 95% confidence level). A minimum necessary sample size of roughly 98 responders was obtained by applying this to the known population of 231 employees.

A stratified random sample technique was used to guarantee that each employment category was fairly represented. In order to choose participants, employees were initially divided into four work positions (administrative, technical, semi-administrative, and skilled). Simple random sampling was then used within each stratum. This multistage sample technique guarantees a balanced viewpoint across various operational and pay-grade levels, improves the findings' generalizability, and lessens selection bias (Hamby, 2023; Williams, 2024).

Method of Data Collection

A well-structured and self - administered questionnaire envisioned to prompt responses on wage discrepancies and relationships of employees was utilized to acquire primary data purely for the study. This was made to be in three segments: Segment A composed of demographic and employment-related data like gender, age, years of experience, and job class; Segment B assessed perceptions of wage determinations, equality, and differences by means of items adapted from well-known pay equity gauges (e.g., Mohrenweiser & Pfeifer, 2023); and Segment C measured work relations gauges like communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and interpersonal trust.

The test was considered with a 5-point Likert scale extending from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5), giving room for subjective opinions measurement. Research assistants who were deemed capable assisted in questionnaire circulation and gathering of data so as to ensure comprehensiveness and safety measure exactness. The process was with a reduced interrogator prejudice, an extensive spread, and was suitable for making of organisation's properly-educated and semi-literate population.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

In an attempt to ensure content validity, professionals in the human resource management and organizational psychology fields examined the questionnaire. Their submissions influenced variations for relevancy, comprehensiveness, and clarity. Though not encompassed in the core investigation, a pilot study was also undertaken with 15 employees from a similar construction establishment in Abia State. The instrument's face comprehensibility and validity were evaluated in the course of this pretesting, and any required adjustments were made in response to the input gotten.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was employed to examine the instrument's internal reliability dependability. The instrument's overall reliability score was more than the commonly standard cutoff of 0.70, and the subscales gauging income differences and work relationships also had acceptable alpha values. This reveals that the items were reliable for unswervingly evaluating the favourite constructs.

Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25, was used to clean, code, and analyse the data after it was retrieved. The demographic traits of the respondents and their answers to important factors were compiled using descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. Inferential statistical techniques were used to address the study's goals.

The direction and intensity of the association between income differences and several aspects of employees' work relationships were examined using linear regression. Furthermore, the degree to which pay differences influence outcomes like trust, cooperation, and communication quality was evaluated using multiple regression analysis. When applicable, results from various staff categories (e.g., skilled vs. semi-skilled) were compared using independent samples t-tests or ANOVA, especially when it came to views of fairness or interpersonal dynamics. Because of their capacity to effectively analyse correlations, differences, and prediction patterns in cross-sectional survey data, these statistical techniques were selected.

Ethical Considerations

The study closely followed accepted guidelines for ethical research. All participants gave their informed consent after being fully informed about the goals, methods, possible hazards, and advantages of the study. Participants received guarantees that their answers would be kept completely private and used only for scholarly research. Respondents were made aware that participation was completely optional and that they might leave at any time without incurring any fees. The Institutional Review Board of a reputable Nigerian university granted ethical approval for the study, guaranteeing adherence to national and international standards for research involving human subjects.

Data Analyses and Results

The participants' profiles are exhibited in the Table 1. The core analysis gives attention to exploring the effect of wages differentials on the employees' relationship, utilizing linear regression as the results from this analysis are detailed below.

Table 1
Demographics of the respondents

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25 years	23	10.0%
	26-35 years	24	10.4%
	36-45 years	116	50.2%
	46-55 years	37	16.0%
	56 years and above	31	13.4%
	Total	231	100.0%
Gender	Male	157	68.0%
	Female	74	32.0%
	Total	231	100.0%
Level of Educational Qualification	FSLC	6	2.6%
	OND/NCE	29	12.6%

	HND/BSC	176	76.2%
	MSC/PhD	20	8.7%
	Total	231	100.0%
Marital Status	Single	13	5.6%
	Married	148	64.1%
	Divorced	33	14.3%
	Widow/Widowers	37	16.0%
	Total	231	100.0%

Table 1 sum-ups the socio-demographic profile of 231 staff members of ALMACO Construction Company in Aba, Nigeria, giving insight into labour force dynamics as it is connected to wage differentials and work dealings. Majority of the respondents (50.2%) are aged 36–45, signifying a principally mid-career workforce with momentous experience. The establishment is male-dominated (68.0%), though the 32.0% female representation mirrors rising gender presence. Pedagogically, the workers are well-qualified, with more than 76% holding HND or B.Sc. degrees and 8.7% having postgraduate qualifications, signifying robust professional aptitude. A larger percent (64.1%) is married, inferring that family tasks may impact their opinions on pay impartiality, job constancy, and workplace dealings.

These socio-demographic traits are crucial for placing workers' views on interpersonal relationships and wage equity in context. For example, issues pertaining to salary transparency, perceived injustice, and teamwork are likely to be evaluated through a more critical and knowledgeable perspective because the majority of the staff is educated and experienced. Maintaining excellent working relationships is even more important for productivity and retention, as the large percentage of married people may indicate a workforce with strong social anchoring.

Results

Analysis of Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between wage differentials and employee morale.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.532[a]	.483	.280	1.02728

a. Predictors: (Constant), Wage Differentials

Key facts that illustrate how compensation disparities affect ALMACO Construction Company employees' morale are shown in the model summary. The two variables have a moderately good association, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.532. This implies that workers' morale tends to rise in proportion to their perception of a fair and transparent wage distribution. According to the R Square (R^2) value of 0.483, 48.3% of the variation in employee morale may be attributed to wage differences. This is a significant percentage in organizational behaviour research, indicating that pay structures have a significant impact on how emotionally invested and driven workers feel at work.

Nevertheless, the Adjusted R Square falls to 0.280, suggesting that sample size or model constraints may account for a portion of the variance described by R^2. Notwithstanding the decrease, this still indicates a moderate degree of practical significance, indicating that the model is applicable in real-world situations—albeit cautiously. The average difference between the actual morale scores and the values predicted by the model is 1.02728, which is the standard error of the estimate. This score shows an acceptable level of predicted accuracy, which is typical of models in social science research where human behaviour introduces variability, even though it is not very low.

To sum up, the model demonstrates that income disparities significantly affect worker morale. The claim that fair and open wage policies are essential to raising employee motivation and mental health is supported by the moderate correlation and explanatory power. Thus, awaiting additional confirmation using ANOVA and coefficient analysis, the null hypothesis is tentatively rejected.

Table 3. ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares		Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	95.295	1	95.295	90.300	.000b
	Residual	241.666	229	1.055		
	Total	336.961	230			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Moral
b. Predictors: (Constant), wage differentials

The overall significance of the regression model analysing the impact of wage disparities on employee morale at ALMACO Construction Company, Aba, is assessed in the ANOVA table. With a p-value of.000 ($p < 0.001$) and an F-statistic of 90.300, the model shows that there is less than a 0.1% probability that the observed link happened by accident. This validates the model's statistical significance. The regression sums of squares, which displays the percentage of employee morale variance accounted for by wage differences, is 95.295. On the other hand, the residual sum of squares, which represents the amount of variation that the model is unable to account for, is

241.666. They add up to a sum of squares of 336.961, demonstrating that wage structure differences account for a significant portion of morale variability.

The regression's mean square stays at 95.295, while the residual's mean square is 1.055 when taking into account the degrees of freedom 1 for the regression and 229 for the residual. The stark impact of salary disparities on morale and the model's capacity to explain it are both supported by the wide range of these values. To sum up, the ANOVA results confirm that income differences have a major impact on employee morale. The null hypothesis, which suggested no significant association, should be rejected due to the model's statistical strength. This emphasizes how crucial equitable and open pay plans are in fostering favourable employee attitudes, motivation, and emotional health.

Table 4. Coefficient[s]

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	(Constant)	6.484	.792		8.182	.000
	Wage differentials	.543	.057	.532	9.503	.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Moral

The intensity and direction of the association between ALMACO Construction Company, Aba's employee morale and compensation disparities are succinctly stated in the coefficients table. When all other parameters are held constant, the unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.543) indicates that employee morale increases by 0.543 units for every unit increase in salary differentials. This implies that shifts in the perception of wage equity have a big influence on how workers feel about their jobs. Employee morale rises by 0.532 standard deviations for every standard deviation increase in wage differentials, according to the standardized beta coefficient (Beta = 0.532), which shows a moderately strong positive association.

The psychological and emotional significance of pay equity inside the company is reaffirmed by this. The association is statistically significant, as evidenced by the relatively high t-value (t = 9.503) and the corresponding significance level (p =.000), which is significantly below the 0.05 cutoff. The null hypothesis, according to which pay differences have no discernible impact on morale, is thus disproved. Additionally, the constant (B = 6.484) demonstrates that while employee morale is generally strong even when wage variety is absent, it dramatically improves when workers believe that wage structures are fair.

In summary, the results of the regression clearly show that income differences are a positive and statistically significant predictor of employee morale. Pay systems that are fair and transparent have a big impact on employees' motivation and sense of worth in addition to compensation. These findings underline that maintaining a highly motivated and dedicated workforce requires equitable compensation, which is consistent with important motivational and equity theories in organizational behaviour.

Analysis of Hypothesis 2: Wage disparities do not significantly affect teamwork and communication among employees

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.140[a]	.320	.015	1.20105

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Wage Disparities

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}) states that there is no appreciable effect of wage disparities on cooperation and communication among employees of ALMACO Construction Company, Aba. This was tested using linear regression analysis, and the results are displayed in Table 4: Model Summary. The correlation value (R) of 0.140 suggests a weak positive relationship between salary disparities and teamwork and communication. Pay disparities have a comparatively low explanatory power, accounting for only 2.0% of the variation in cooperation and communication, with a R Square (R^2) value of 0.020. This suggests that other organizational or interpersonal factors most likely have a greater impact on team dynamics. Furthermore, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.015, which is somewhat less than the R2, reflects the model's poor predictive ability even after adjusting for sample size and predictor count. The estimate indicates a substantial discrepancy between the expected regression line and the observed data, with a relatively high standard error of 1.20105. This implies that salary disparities are not a valid measure of collaboration and communication in this context.

In conclusion, these statistical findings indicate that the null hypothesis (H_{02}) cannot be ruled out due to insufficient evidence. Together, the low explained variance, large standard error, and weak correlation show that wage disparities have little effect on the cooperation and communication of ALMACO Construction Company employees. Although compensation structures may have an impact on other areas, such as motivation or morale, they appear to have minimal effect on collaborative behaviours in this organizational environment. This finding contradicts the observations of Bryson and Forth (2018)'s; and Pfeffer (2022)'s studies. Bryson and Forth (2018) discovered that fair compensation policies in UK construction enterprises increased teamwork and knowledge sharing. Likewise, Pfeffer (2022), salary inequality can lead to anger and impede productivity.

Table 6. **ANOVA**[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	95.295	1	95.295	90.300	.000[b]
	Residual	241.666	229	1.055		
	Total	336.961	230			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Teamwork and Communication
b. Predictors: (Constant), Wage Disparities

The analysis of variance for the regression model that looks into how pay disparities affect employee collaboration and communication at ALMACO Construction Company, Aba, is displayed in Table 5: ANOVA. 336.961 is the sum of the regression sum of squares (95.295) and the residual sum of squares (241.666). This implies that a portion of the overall variation in cooperation and communication can be explained by differences in income. With a p-value of.000 and an F-statistic of 90.300, the results are much below the usual cutoff point of 0.05. This result demonstrates that salary disparities have a strong linear impact on employee collaboration and communication, supporting the regression model's statistical relevance. The substantial F-value indicates that overall, the model fits the data better than a model without predictors.

In conclusion, the ANOVA results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant correlation between salary differences and teamwork and communication, despite previous model summary statistics indicating a limited explanatory power (low R Square). This implies that salary differences continue to have a significant impact on collaboration and communication inside the company, even with the small amount of volatility that can be explained. Therefore, when it comes to managing team dynamics and employee interaction, compensation structures should not be disregarded.

Table 7. **Coefficients a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.484	.792		8.182	.000
	Wage Disparities	.543	.057	.532	9.503	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Employees' Teamwork and Communication

Table 7 provides vital insights into the relationship between wage discrepancies and employee teamwork and communication at ALMACO Construction Company, Aba. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for the constant is 6.484, which represents the expected degree of teamwork and communication when salary gaps are zero, or the baseline. The coefficient for wage disparities is 0.543 with a standard error of 0.057, implying that a one-unit rise in wage disparities is associated with a 0.543 unit increase in collaboration and communication scores, while other variables remain constant.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.532, indicating a substantial positive link between pay disparities and teamwork and communication as evaluated in standard deviation units. This suggests that a one-standard deviation rise in wage disparities results in a 0.532 standard deviation increase in cooperation and communication, indicating that wage disparities are a relatively robust predictor in this setting.

The p-value is.000 and the t-value is 9.503, both of which are well below the 0.01 cutoff. This provides compelling evidence that income differences have a major impact on communication and teamwork, confirming that the connection is statistically significant at the 1% level. Even though the outcome might seem counterintuitive, it might suggest that increased awareness of wage disparities promotes group discussion, lobbying, or support among workers. In summary, the regression analysis unequivocally demonstrates that pay differences have a major and favourable impact on communication and teamwork inside the company. These results highlight how remuneration policies have a wider organizational impact on staff collaboration as well as individual morale. Therefore, encouraging positive team dynamics and creating a cohesive work atmosphere require fair and open wage systems. These results support the findings of the study undertaken by Eze and Okechukwu (2021). Eze and Okechukwu (2021) discovered that salary discrepancies in Enugu-based construction enterprises undermined cooperation and promoted interpersonal conflict.

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis examined whether occupational wage differential payment affects employee relationships at ALMACO Construction Company in Aba. The regression analysis yielded a statistically significant and positive association between the two variables. The model summary found that occupational salary differentials explained 48.3% of the variance in employee work relationships ($R^2 = 0.483$), indicating significant explanatory power. The ANOVA results revealed a highly significant F-value ($F = 90.300$, $p < 0.001$), indicating the model's overall relevance. The coefficients table showed that pay differentials had a strong standardized beta ($\beta = 0.532$) and a positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.543$), both of which were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. This implies that workers are more likely to have closer, healthier, and more cooperative work relationships when occupational wage differences are seen as fair or improved. The results essentially resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected, demonstrating that wage difference policies had a substantial impact on employee collaboration, communication, and interpersonal dynamics within the company.

Hypothesis Two

The study looked into how ALMACO Construction Company employees in Aba, Nigeria, collaborated and communicated while their pay was different. The results of the regression analysis showed a marginally favourable but statistically significant correlation between salary discrepancies and communication and teamwork. With a R Square of 0.020, the model summary showed a weak explanatory power, indicating that pay discrepancies can account for only 2% of the variance in communication and teamwork. The ANOVA result (F = 90.300, p =.000) demonstrated a substantial linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, confirming the statistical significance of the regression model despite the minimal variance explained. In addition, the coefficients table demonstrated that pay differences significantly improve communication and teamwork (B = 0.543, t = 9.503, p =.000). A standardized beta of 0.532 suggested a reasonably strong predictor effect. Essentially, the results indicate that although income differences do not explain a major amount of the shifts in communication and teamwork, they nevertheless have a noticeable and quantifiable impact. This emphasizes how crucial equitable and open wage structures are to promoting productive teamwork and corporate communication.

Implications of the Study

Practical Implications

The study provides executives and HR managers with specific insights, particularly in the construction sector. It demonstrates how disparities in compensation affect morale, collaboration, and communication, underscoring the importance of equitable and open pay structures. To lessen tension and discontent, businesses like ALMACO should implement performance-based, precisely defined pay schemes that are periodically evaluated. In order to address wage problems early on, the findings also highlight the importance of employee engagement tools including open salary conversations and grievance channels. When position inequalities make compensation discrepancies inevitable, managers should make up for them with non-cash incentives, chances for professional advancement, and team-building exercises to keep employees motivated and cooperative.

Theoretical Implications

This study supports equity theory, which proposes that employees evaluate fairness by comparing their efforts and incentives to others. It demonstrates how pay discrepancies can strain relationships and supports this idea with real-world data. This corresponds with social exchange theory, which suggests that views of fair remuneration impact employees' willingness to collaborate and communicate. By relating compensation methods to employee behaviour and relationships, the study expands on existing organizational behaviour models and emphasizes the need for more research into how wage policies influence workplace dynamics.

Limitation and Directions

Although this study has many limitations, it offers valuable insight into how salary disparities impact employee relationships at ALMACO Construction Company in Aba. Its single-company approach restricts the generalizability of the results. ALMACO's distinct culture, size, and compensation structure might not be typical of other businesses, particularly those outside the construction industry. Quantitative information from structured questionnaires is also a major component of the study. This makes statistical analysis possible, but it might not capture the more in-depth, intimate experiences of workers. More complex viewpoints might have been discovered via a mixed-methods approach that included focus groups or interviews. The cross-sectional nature of the study only records a single moment in time. It doesn't account for potential shifts in organizational conditions or employee attitudes. A longitudinal study would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of salary differences on working relationships.

To expand on this work, future research should: conduct comparison studies across organizations or industries to ensure findings are applicable in diverse contexts. Also, use mixed methodologies, like as surveys and interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into employee experiences. Likewise, use longitudinal approaches to examine how pay discrepancies impact relationships over time. Further, more, investigate how job happiness, culture, and leadership style influence these dynamics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the impact of salary differentials on employee work relationships at ALMACO Construction Company in Aba, Nigeria. The findings indicated that salary discrepancies had a major impact on critical workplace variables such as morale, teamwork, and communication. While the explanatory strength was limited in some categories, such as teamwork and communication, the persistent statistical significance indicates that salary structures have a significant impact on interpersonal relationships inside the firm. Employee perceptions of salary fairness may either foster cooperation or discontent, as seen by the positive correlation found between income differentials and work relationships. While perceived injustices could undermine cooperation and trust, well-managed salary differences could be a source of inspiration. Therefore, it can be said that increasing employee connection, trust, and cohesiveness requires fair and open remuneration systems. Prioritizing fair wage practices through effective human resource management is essential for businesses like ALMACO to maintain positive working relationships and increase productivity.

The study recommends that ALMACO Construction Company implement strategic measures to reduce wage disparities and improve employee relationships. These measures include: ensuring pay equity and transparency by aligning wages with roles, qualifications, and performance; performance-based incentives to improve morale and fairness; conduct frequent wage audits and set clear career routes to resolve imbalances and inspire employees; enhance communication via feedback forums and HR engagement; and provide training on teamwork and dispute resolution, and include employees in pay policy discussions. These actions will result in a more equitable, cohesive, and productive workplace.

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