

EFFECT OF PERCEPTUAL BIASES ON WORKPLACE HARMONY AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED SMES IN ZAMFARA STATE

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Abstract

Perceptual biases such as selective perception, stereotyping, halo effect, and projection distort employees' judgments about their colleagues and supervisors toward achieving organizational and individual set goals and objectives. It is on this note that the study on the effect of perceptual biases on workplace harmony among employees in selected SMEs in Zamfara State was conducted. The aim is to examine the effect of perceptual biases like stereotyping, halo effect, and selective perception on workplace harmony among employees in selected SMEs in Zamfara State. The sample size of the study is 397 derived from Taro Yamene sample formula. A purposive sampling technique was used to extract the respondents. Five-point Likert scale questionnaires containing five questions each on the construct were adopted for the study. Data were interpreted and analyzed using Partial Least Square -Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The result revealed that stereotypes and halo effect have a positive and statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State while selective perception has an insignificant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. These results underscore the need for SME managers to enhance capacity building to reduce the biasness of stereotypes and to ensure cleared, transparent and consistent performance evaluations processes to reduce halo effect in employee promotion and recognition in the organization. There is equally a need for to develop policies and rules that facilitate optimum supervision and good leadership to achieve workplace harmony.

Keywords: Stereotyping, Halo Effect, Selective Perception, Workplace Harmony, Employees

1. Introduction

Globally, it has been revealed that inclusive work environments result in innovation and team effectiveness. corporate performance and attract more capable workforce to the organization (Van Laar et al., 2019). The inclusive working environment ensures that

all the employees are treated equally and fairly despite their gender, ethnicity, and religion or based on any other criteria that enhance a balanced working environment. This balanced working environment contributes to ease and comfort, eliminates unnecessary disputes and tensions, and

generally builds better relationships among employees (Uchendu, et al., 2024). Harmonious workplace is that which works smoothly, through a system of good verbal, nonverbal and physical communication that keeps the peaceful environment promoting mutual respect among people on one hand, collaborative teamwork as part of this atmosphere and indeed unison for common objectives.

Workplace harmony refers to the amicable relationship among management, employees, and colleagues aimed at achieving organizational goals and objectives. Workplace harmony is important because it contributes to employee happiness and fosters better relationships, as well as promotes creativity, adaptability, and productivity. Harmony, when supported by malleable and adaptable Human Resources practices, can help drive the prosperity of both individuals and organizations (Georgescu, et al., 2024). Employee conflicts are differences of opinion or disagreements between two or more employees which can result in personal clashes, usually pertaining to their job role, duties and use of company resources. It will be conflicts that escalate rapidly and extinguishes, or one that slowly starts up bit can generate enough.

Perception is a psychological process through which individuals interpret and make sense of their environment. According to Suwanaposee (2024), perception can sometimes be distorted due to personal beliefs, experiences, and expectations, resulting in perceptual biases. These biases

include stereotyping, halo effect, selective perception, and projection, which can influence how employees judge their colleagues and supervisors. Such biases may lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, and conflict within the workplace.

Despite the importance of workplace harmony in enhancing employee cooperation, organizational commitment, and productivity, many SMEs in Zamfara State continue to experience persistent interpersonal conflicts, mistrust, poor collaboration, favoritism, low morale, truancy, and absenteeism among employees. This concern must be understood within the broader organisational challenges confronting Nigerian SMEs, which include constraints that can undermine their survival and performance (Suleiman et al., 2021). Against this background, perceptual biases such as stereotyping, selective perception, halo effect, horn effect, and projection may constitute an additional behavioural challenge by influencing how employees and managers interpret the behaviors, attitudes, and performance of others. When employees make judgments based on personal beliefs, assumptions, or prior experiences rather than objective evaluation, workplace relationships may become strained, thereby reducing teamwork and organizational effectiveness.

Although several studies have examined perceptual biases and employee-related outcomes, most existing studies have concentrated on large organizations and

multinational firms, with limited empirical attention given to SMEs, particularly in Zamfara State. Furthermore, prior studies focused mainly on outcomes such as employee performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, while workplace harmony has received inadequate scholarly attention. This creates both a contextual and conceptual gap in the literature. Therefore, there is a need for an empirical investigation into the effect of perceptual biases on workplace harmony among employees in selected SMEs in Zamfara State. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how dimensions of perceptual biases influence workplace harmony within SMEs, thereby contributing to both academic knowledge and managerial practice.

The following null hypotheses were designed and tested to guide the study.

H₀1: Stereotypes has no significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara state

H₀2: Halo Effect has no significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara state

H₀3: Selective perception has no significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara state

1. Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Harmony

Workplace harmony is a condition of work environment where employees are accorded with value, respect and protected and relate freely without any conflicts. Hauwa, et al., (2025) posited that workplace harmony is a condition of respect accorded to individuals working together with understanding between employee, employers and management. Mutual understanding and mutual respect among worker, coworkers and management create an environment for team work that serve as an agent that minimized conflicts, misunderstanding and increase organizational performance. Usman (2025) affirm that workplace harmony is an interpersonal respect that stimulate mutual understanding of differences, tolerate one another to create a suitable atmosphere for better organizational performance. Thus, Al-Hasnawi (2024) define workplace harmony as the nurturing of well-mannered, cooperative and conflict-free relationships that link employee wellbeing with business success. To Nwinyokpughi and Okere (2019), workplace harmony is an act of incorporating corporate goals with employee well-being through exhibition of good character, love and care among the individuals. Bob-Manuel et al. (2019), stressed workplace harmony as the practice of unifying employee needs and organizational demands. Creating a workplace harmony create enabling environment for organizational progression and sustainability. Thus, workplace harmony

in this study is conceptualized as the atmosphere where workers relate freely horizontally and vertically in order to complement both the employees' need and organization corporate objectives.

Perceptual Biases

Perception bias is the word used to identify the predetermined expectations we all make when faced with new situations or people and the conclusions that is based upon these assumptions. Suveren (2022) define perceptual bias as a mental error where the opinion of reality is prejudiced by individual expectation, Stereotyping, halo effect and selective perception rather than the reality. This aspect has adverse effects on interpersonal relationships and relationships in social life. Organization is a social setting comprises of diverse sets of individual working toward achieving common organizational target. An individual's judgments shape their interpersonal relationships, which are a major driver of workplace harmony. However, perception bias is a personal judgment relating to people or events that is influence by an individual personality.

Stereotyping

Stereotypes are rooted in individual thinking and perceptions that become part of broader social structures. They manifest in various forms, ranging from mild prejudice to more serious discrimination. Because stereotypes are automatic and often unconscious, they become part of everyday ways of thinking that appear normal, yet hold great potential for forming prejudices. Wojtowicz, (2021)

defined Stereotypes as views, opinions, judgments and superstitions that go beyond mere classification. These error generalizations denote a group where identical characteristics are attributed to all its members, regardless of the real differences between them. Rafiuddin, et al.,(2025) viewed that Stereotypes originate from both social and individual sources. Group bases are derived from the norms, values, and patterns of behavior that are widely recognized within a particular society or community, which people learn through socialization, culture, media, and interaction with others. People sources, on the other hand, develop from a person's personal experiences, observations, and the way they perceive and interpret reality. As a result, stereotypes are shaped not only by societal influences but also by individual perceptions, culture, pier group and experiences that affect how people form judgments about others (Wojtowicz, 2021).

Halo effect

The halo effect is a cognitive bias in which individuals form overall impressions of others based on a single positive or negative attribute, which then influences their judgment of other unrelated characteristics (Noor, 2023). It occurs when people allow initial perceptions such as attractiveness, competence, or likability to shape broader evaluations, leading to potentially distorted or inaccurate conclusions. For example, attractive individuals may be perceived as more successful, intelligent, or socially competent than they actually are.

Conversely, the reverse halo effect, also known as the horn effect, occurs when a negative impression of a person leads to the assumption that they possess other undesirable traits (Marucci et al., 2021). In organizational contexts, the halo effect operates in two main ways: first, through the evaluation of employees by colleagues or supervisors within the workplace; and second, through how perceptions of individuals influence judgments about organizational products, services, or overall reputation (Brown et al., 2017). Overall, these biases can lead to unfair assessments, inaccurate impressions, and flawed decision-making in organizations.

Selective perception

Selective perception is a mental reasoning process by prioritizing information that have direct alignment with and overlook others that has no immediate effect. Bargh, (2022) view selective perception as a Selective attention given to issues that are connected to the concern and worried of an individual and have less attention to others that do not have psychological concern to individual. When a person committed selective perception error, that person might not be able to make a wise decision or judgment with respect to the issues as take. Kankam, (2025) defied selective perception as a process of screening out of undesired information from numerous stimuli. This make individual to be selective unconsciously and interpret information in a way that support the need, expectation and their beliefs. This is because human brain can only process single information at a time

and selection became necessary based on what individual found relevant. In an organization it's difficult to listen to two or more colleagues talking at once or responding to two supervisors at a time

2.2 Empirical Review

Stereotypes and Workplace Harmony

McKenzie (2017) conducted a study titled "The Stereotypes and Biases that Plague Millennial Leaders: Best Practices and Strategies for Job Promotion." The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges millennial face in being promoted to executive leadership roles in U.S. organizations, particularly due to stereotypes that portray them as narcissistic, entitled, or lacking the competencies required for leadership. The study adopted a phenomenological research approach and collected data through interviews with 15 millennial leaders. The findings revealed that millennial often encounter bias and negative stereotypes that hinder their advancement into leadership positions. However, successful organizations address these challenges by investing in employee development, promoting diversity and inclusion, and encouraging holistic leadership practices such as emotional intelligence and ethical leadership. The study further found that millennial leaders overcome these barriers through authentic leadership, continuous learning, and a strong sense of purpose and meaningful work. McKenzie also proposed the T.E.A.M. (Teaching Empathy and Mindfulness) framework, which emphasizes empathy,

mindfulness, and purposeful leadership as strategies for developing effective millennial leaders. However, haven discuss valuable insights into stereotypes, the study focused on a specific organization located outside Zamfara state, this limits the generalizability of its findings to SMEs within Zamfara state and this highlight a gap in the literature that the present study aims to fill.

Bednarska and Jędrzejak (2022) examined the concept of workplace stereotypes in their study titled “The Meaning of Stereotypes in the Workplace in Respect of Employability.” The study aimed to identify common stereotypes present in the labour market and explore how these stereotypes influence individuals’ employability and perceptions of their career opportunities. The researchers adopted a descriptive research approach based on literature analysis, focusing on common stereotypes found in the Polish labour market. The findings indicated that workplace stereotypes can negatively influence employees’ opportunities, career development, and employability by shaping employers’ perceptions and expectations of workers. The study also suggested that breaking workplace stereotypes can improve employees’ confidence, opportunities for advancement, and overall perception of employability. However, haven discuss valuable insights into stereotypes, the study adopted literature analysis method, which may not produce findings that are generalizable. This limits the acceptability of the results and highlights a

methodological gap to be filled in ;this study.

Zhang (2020) conducted a study titled “Stereotype Threat at Work.” The study examined the concept of stereotype threat in the workplace and how negative stereotypes can influence employee performance and behavior. The study adopted a conceptual and literature-based approach, reviewing experimental findings related to stereotype threat and workplace diversity management. The findings indicated that when individuals from stereotyped groups are placed in situations where their abilities are being evaluated, they may experience anxiety and pressure due to the stereotype, which can lead to underperformance despite their actual capabilities. The study emphasized that stereotype threat remains a challenge in modern workplaces and can hinder employees from reaching their full potential. To address this issue, the author recommended that organizations create inclusive work environments, reduce stereotype-based judgments, and implement diversity management strategies to ensure employees can perform effectively without psychological pressure. However, haven discuss valuable insights into stereotypes, the study adopted conceptual and literature-based approach, which may not produce findings that are generalizable. This limits the acceptability of the results and highlights a methodological gap to be filled in this study.

However, the studies (McKenzie, 2017; Bednarska & Jędrzejak, 2022; Zhang, 2020)

collectively examine workplace stereotypes and biases, although they differ in focus, contextual settings, and methodological approaches, thereby providing a basis for critical comparison and synthesis. Overall, there is a clear convergence in their findings that workplace stereotypes and biases negatively affect employees' opportunities, performance, and career progression.

Halo Effect and Workplace Harmony

Kordsmeyer, et al., (2024) conducted an empirical study titled "Halo Effect of Faces and Bodies: Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences Between German and Japanese Observers." The study aimed to examine the halo effect in person perception, particularly how physical attractiveness of faces and bodies influences the attribution of other positive traits such as pro-sociality, health, and dominance. The researchers adopted a quantitative experimental design in which facial photographs and 3D body scans of 165 German men were evaluated by 123 German and 100 Japanese observers. Participants rated the images on attributes including attractiveness, pro-sociality, health, and physical dominance. The findings revealed a strong attractiveness halo effect, where individuals perceived as more attractive were also judged as more pro-social, healthier, and more dominant. The results were largely consistent across both cultural groups, suggesting that halo effect biases in person perception operate similarly across individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The study highlights how perceptual biases can influence judgments about individuals in social and

professional contexts. However, the study has extensively dwelt on the variable, the study was conducted in area with different cultural background and different organization context, and this limited their generalizability in this context.

Biçer (2022) conducted a study titled "Avoiding Halo Effect in Employee Selection: Implementing Effective Techniques in Hiring." The study aimed to examine how the halo effect influences employee selection processes and how organizations can minimize this bias during recruitment. The research adopted a conceptual approach based on literature review, focusing on how recruiters may form overall impressions of job applicants based on a single trait or characteristic. The study revealed that the halo effect can lead to biased hiring decisions, where candidates are evaluated more favorably due to one positive attribute rather than their overall competencies. This may negatively affect the quality of recruitment and organizational performance. The study emphasized the importance of structured and scientifically designed recruitment procedures, including clear job descriptions, standardized interviews, and objective evaluation criteria. The author concluded that minimizing the halo effect in recruitment can help organizations select more competent employees and improve long-term organizational success. However, haven discuss valuable insights into stereotypes, the study adopted conceptual approach based on literature review, which may not produce findings that are generalizable. This

limits the acceptability of the results and highlights a methodological gap to be filled in this study.

Shao (2023) examined the topic “How Do the Halo Effect and Horn Effect Influence the Human Resources Manager’s Recruitment Decision in an Occupation Interview?” The study aimed to explore how cognitive biases, specifically the halo effect and horn effect, influence the recruitment decisions of human resource managers during job interviews. The research adopted a literature review approach, analyzing previous studies on human decision-making and recruitment bias. The findings revealed that HR managers’ hiring decisions are often influenced by initial impressions of candidates, where a single positive trait may lead to an overall favorable judgment (halo effect), while a single negative trait may lead to an unfavorable evaluation (horn effect). The study also found that these biases are often influenced by stereotypes, cultural background, gender, and occupational differences. To minimize these biases, the study recommended the use of structured interviews, standardized evaluation criteria, pre-employment tests, blind recruitment practices, and AI-based screening tools to improve fairness and objectivity in recruitment decisions. However, haven discuss valuable insights into stereotypes, the study adopted literature review approach, which may not produce findings that are generalizable. This limits the acceptability of the results and highlights

a methodological gap to be filled in this study.

However, the reviewed studies (Kordsmeyer et al., 2024; Biçer, 2022; Shao, 2023) collectively examine the halo effect in interpersonal judgment and recruitment contexts, although they differ in scope, methodology, and analytical focus, thereby providing a strong basis for comparison and synthesis. In contrast, Biçer (2022) focuses specifically on recruitment practices, using a conceptual literature-based approach to show how the halo effect can distort hiring decisions when recruiters overgeneralize from a single positive trait, leading to biased selection outcomes and reduced workforce quality

Selective Perception and Workplace Harmony

Wu, Mei & Cervantez (2022) conducted a study titled “Preferences and Perceptions of Workplace Participation: A Cross-Cultural Study” that examined how employees from different cultural contexts perceive and prefer workplace participation. The study involved three empirical studies with a total of 1,138 full-time employees from the United States and China. Using free association tests, text analyses, and experimental manipulations of workplace participation, the study found that while American employees strongly endorsed high participation environments and linked them with positive outcomes (productivity, job satisfaction, lower conflict), Chinese employees showed slightly higher endorsement for low participation settings,

associating them with productivity benefits. Across cultures, participation was generally perceived positively, but cultural norms influenced preferences for how participation is structured. The findings highlight the importance of cultural context in designing participatory workplace practices and suggest that organizations should tailor participation strategies to employee expectations and cultural norms to maximize engagement and productivity. However, they based their study on two major countries with diversity of culture and geographical locations and this may limit the generalizability of the result.

Bob-Manuel, Georgewill & Tamunomiebi (2024) conducted a study titled “Self-awareness and Workplace Harmony of Printing Companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria” to examine the relationship between employees’ self-awareness and workplace harmony. The study focused on goal attainment and cohesiveness as key indicators of harmony. Using a cross-sectional survey of 62 staff members from 19 printing companies, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results revealed significant positive relationships between self-awareness and both goal attainment ($r = 0.727$, $p < 0.05$) and cohesiveness ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that self-aware employees are better able to manage stress, respond constructively to feedback, and foster positive team dynamics, which collectively enhance workplace harmony. The authors

recommend that organizations invest in emotional intelligence training to improve self-awareness, strengthen team relationships, and promote organizational growth. However, the study data is relatively small to provide a dependable result. this limits the acceptability of the results.

However, the reviewed studies (Wu, Mei & Cervantez, 2022; Bob-Manuel, Georgewill & Tamunomiebi, 2024) examine workplace-related behavioral factors and their influence on organizational outcomes, although they differ significantly in focus, context, and methodological orientation, thereby providing a basis for critical comparison and synthesis. A key similarity between the two studies is their shared emphasis on psychological and behavioral factors as determinants of positive workplace outcomes such as productivity, cohesion, and engagement.

2.3 Research Framework/Model and Underpinning Theory

Perceptual Bias Theory

Perceptual Bias Theory evolved from mid-20th century research in social psychology on how people interpret and misinterpret others., it states that perceptions are not build on reality but rather shaped with biases that make individuals to perceived and interpret stimuli in a way that is align with their beliefs (Azizah & Ulfah, 2021). This bias is driven by perceptions which cam make individual to be selective on information that is so dear and align with their beliefs or needs while abandoning that

information that contradicting their needs. The theory understood perceptual bias to be an adaptive syndrome that aid decision making process in a multifaceted environment, the danger aspect of this is that it can enhance misconceptions and strengthening stereotypes.

Social Perception Theory

Social Perception Theory was developed by Jerome Bruner and Renato Tagiuri in the year 1954, states that individuals collect, interpret and evaluate environmental information for the purpose of understanding others based on their beliefs the theory posited that perception is a social concepts that is driven by cultural beliefs and interpersonal relations (Anggraini & Mardhiah, 2023). Wiltshire, et al.,(2021) argue that social perception is a bias that is emanated from persistent societal changes. These theories align with the context of the study as it provide conceptual foundation and focused on how perceptions biases and social interpretation that influence employees attitude and behavior.

2. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This method is suitable for this study because it enables the researcher to obtain information directly from the respondents. The population of this study is 48,767 employees of MSMEs in Zamfara State, according to the National Survey of MSMEs (2017). The use of a descriptive survey design is consistent with previous Nigerian research that employed a cross-sectional survey to obtain data from owners

and managers of MSMEs (Suleiman et al., 2021). Similarly, Bello and Dantsoho (2025) employed a survey of 300 customers drawn from a defined population and used descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to examine the study variables. The sample size of the study is 397, derived from Taro Yamane sample formula. The subjects of the study comprise employees and employers of registered MSMEs in Zamfara State. A purposive sampling technique was used; this is to enable the researcher to access participants who are relevant to the study. The use of this sampling technique is justified because the study requires information-rich participants who can provide accurate and meaningful responses regarding perceptual biases and workplace harmony. Since not all employees may have adequate understanding or exposure to the issues being studied, purposive sampling ensures that only respondents with relevant experience and insight are included.

However, to ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The result of the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.70 , which is considered acceptable for social science research. This indicates that the instrument is reliable and capable of producing consistent results across repeated administrations. The use of a structured survey instrument to collect empirical information from a defined population is also consistent with previous survey research involving Nigerian university

students, in which financial literacy data were collected through a structured class test together with sociodemographic information (Bello, 2023). The specific acceptability threshold for Cronbach's alpha should, however, continue to be supported by the study's existing methodological citation rather than by Bello (2023), since the excerpt supplied from that study does not establish a Cronbach's alpha threshold.

In data analysis, the study applies descriptive and inferential statistics to the data collected. The mean and the standard deviation were used to analyse the survey item responses, and SmartPLS's Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), containing the measurement model and structural model, was employed. The application of multivariate statistical techniques to examine relationships among constructs is consistent with previous Nigerian research that used confirmatory composite analysis to evaluate measurement-model quality before testing structural relationships using path analysis and moderation analysis (Suleiman et al., 2021). Similarly, Bello (2025) employed a quantitative approach using panel regression and mediation analysis to examine relationships among variables, while Bello and Umar (2019) employed multiple OLS and GLS regression techniques to estimate relationships using empirical financial data. These studies provide methodological precedent for the

use of quantitative inferential techniques to investigate relationships among variables, although their analytical techniques and data structures differ from the PLS-SEM approach adopted in the present study. The measurement model was used for validity and reliability tests and other relevant tests to assess the constructs, while the structural model was adopted to evaluate the hypotheses that were put forth at the 0.05 level of significance. The t-value was used to make a decision regarding the hypotheses tested. According to recommendations made by Cohen (1988), Lind et al. (2013), and Kumar et al. (2013) for the use of t-value in the estimation of variables' significance level, the null hypotheses should be rejected if the t-value is greater than 1.96 and accepted if it is less than 1.96. The variables were coded as *Stereotypes* (STR), *Halo Effect* (HEF), *Selective Perception* (SLP), and *Workplace Harmony* (WHA).

3. Results and Discussion

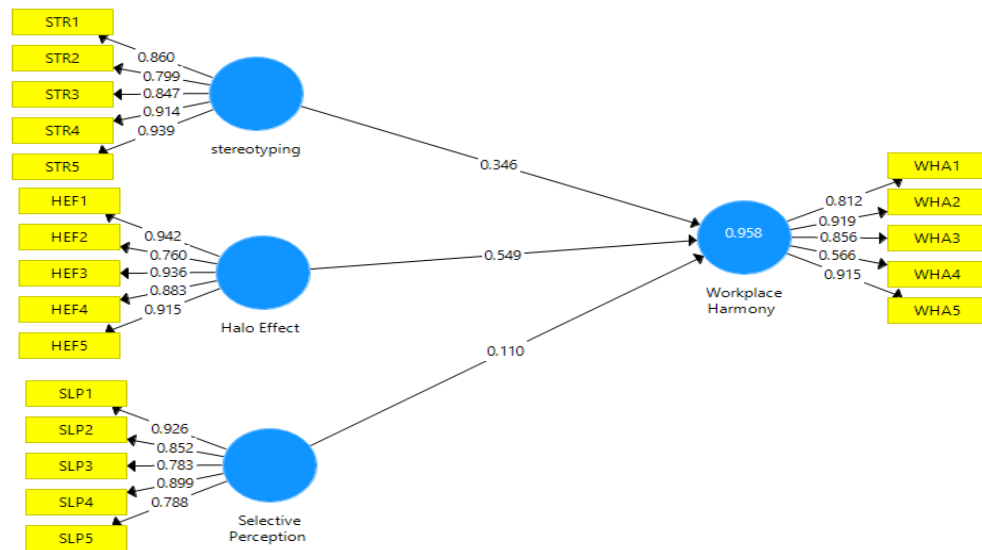
The study distributed three hundred and ninety seven (397) copies of questionnaires out of which three hundred and sixty nine questionnaires (369) were filled and returned. As indicated from the table 4.1, 20 twenty were not properly filled but returned, and 08 were not returned. This was achieved mostly based on the nature the instruments were administered (i.e one-on-one basis). Subsequent analyses were conducted using the 369 instruments valid responses.

Table 1 Administration of Instrument

Description	Responses	Percentage (%)
Completely filled and returned	369	93%
Not properly filled but returned	20	05%
Not returned	0 8	02%
Total	397	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Assessment of Measurement Model



Source: Measurement model Output, 2026.

Table 2; Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SDV	Kurtosis	Skewness
Stereotypes (STR),	-0.000	0.607	-2.303	0.692	1.000	0.390	-1.417
Halo effect (HEF),	- 0.000	0.637	-2.608	0.831	1.000	1.912	-1.797
Selective perception (SLP)	0.000	0.463	-2.292	0.906	1.000	0.638	-1.257
workplace harmony (WHA)	0.000	0.296	-2.735	0.692	1.000	1.451	-1.616

Source: SMART PLS Output, 2026

Table 2 above presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables: Stereotypes (STR), Halo Effect (HEF), Selective Perception (SLP), and Workplace Harmony (WHA). The mean values for all variables are approximately 0.000 with a standard deviation of 1.000, indicating that the data were standardized using SmartPLS to facilitate comparison among variables. The median values range from 0.296 for WHA to 0.637 for HEF, suggesting slight differences in the central tendency of the responses. The minimum and maximum values show that the data vary across respondents, with WHA recording the lowest minimum value (-

2.735) and SLP the highest maximum value (0.906). Furthermore, the skewness values for all variables are negative (STR = -1.417, HEF = -1.797, SLP = -1.257, WHA = -1.616), indicating that the distributions are left-skewed with more responses concentrated on the higher side of the scale. The kurtosis values are positive (ranging from 0.390 to 1.912), implying a moderately peaked distribution. Overall, the statistics suggest that the data distribution is acceptable for further analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling.

Table 3 Outer Loading and Reliability

S/N	Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
1.	Stereotypes (STR)	STR1 0.860 STR2 0.791 STR3 0.847 STR4 0.914 STR5 0.939	0.921	0.941	0.762
2.	Halo Effect (HEF)	HEF1 0.942 HEF2 0.760 HEF3 0.936 HEF4 0.883 HEF5 0.915	0.933	0.950	0.742
3.	Selective perception (SLP)	SLP1 0.926 SLP2 0.852 SLP3 0.783 SLP4 0.899 SLP5 0.788	0.905	0.929	0.726
4.	workplace Harmony (WHA)	WHA1 0.812 WHA2 0.919 WHA3 0.856 WHA4 0.566 WHA5 0.915	0.876	0.912	0.679

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

In table 3 to establish internal consistency reliability of the construct, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) should be higher than the threshold of 0.7. It is clear from the table 3, that all the latent indicators

are reliable since their values are higher than the threshold value of 0.7. As an alternative to Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, Dijkstra and Henseler (2015) proposed rho A as an approximately exact

measure of construct reliability, which usually lies between Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability.

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which a construct converges to explain the variance of its associated measurement items. It assesses whether multiple indicators of a construct share a high proportion of variance in common. According to Hair et al. (2016), convergent validity is established when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is at least 0.50, indicating that the construct explains 50 percent or more of the variance of its indicators, while the remaining variance is attributable to measurement error. Convergent validity is further supported when indicator (outer) loadings are

statistically significant and preferably exceed 0.70, although values above 0.50 are acceptable in exploratory research. High factor loadings indicate that the indicators are strongly associated with their underlying construct.

As shown in Table 3, all constructs recorded AVE values greater than 0.50, thereby satisfying the recommended threshold for convergent validity. This result confirms that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its measurement items. Furthermore, the indicator loadings for all retained items were above the acceptable limits and statistically significant, providing additional evidence that convergent validity was achieved for all constructs in the measurement model.

Table 4 Explanatory power

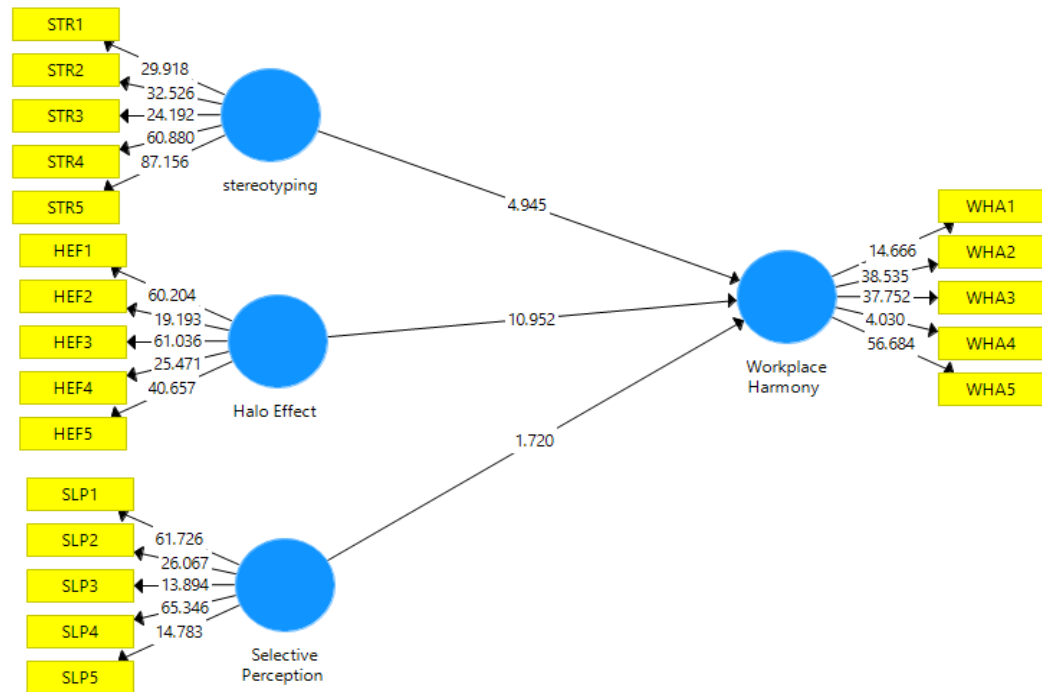
Variables	R Square	Q2 (=1-SSE/SSO)	P-value
Workplace Harmony	0.732	0.630	0.000

Source: SMART-PLS Output, 2026.

The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R-square). The R^2 value stood at 0.732 implying that 73.2% of variation in workplace harmony is explained by Stereotypes, Halo Effect and Selective perception. The remaining 26.8% percentage of variation could be explained by other factors not included in the study.

The Q2 value was obtained through the blindfolding procedure and it was employed to assess the predictive relevance of the model. The rule of thumb stated that Q^2 value above 0 indicated that the model has a predictive power for endogenous construct while Q^2 value less than zero or equal to zero indicated that the model lacks predictive relevance. The Q^2 values of 0.630 indicate acceptable predictive relevance, therefore validate the construct in this study.

Assessing the Structural Model



Source: Structural model Output, 2026.

Table 5 Path coefficient of the model

Variables	Beta	T/Statistics	P-Value	Decision
Stereotypes (STR)	0.346	4.677	0.000	Rejected
Halo Effect (HEF)	0.549	10.371	0.000	Rejected
Selective perception (SLP)	0.110	1.609	0.108	Accepted

Source: SMART-PLS Output, 2026.

Test of Hypotheses

The result in Table 5 shows that Stereotypes (STR) have a beta coefficient of 0.346, t-statistic of 4.677, and p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance and the t-statistic is greater than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that stereotypes have a positive and statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in

Zamfara State. Therefore, it can be concluded that stereotypes significantly influence workplace harmony in the study area.

Halo Effect (HEF) has a beta coefficient of 0.549, t-statistic of 10.371, and p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance and the t-statistic is greater than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates

that the halo effect has a positive and statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. Therefore, the study concludes that the halo effect significantly influences workplace harmony in the selected SMEs.

Selective Perception (SLP) has a beta coefficient of 0.110, t-statistic of 1.609, **and** p-value of 0.108. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance **and the** t-statistic is less than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that selective perception does not have a statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. Therefore, the study concludes that selective perception does not significantly influence workplace harmony in the selected SMEs.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that stereotypes have a positive and statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. With the result evidence of $\beta = 0.346$, $t = 4.677$, $p < 0.000$, this result change the narrative that stereotypes are often considered to have negative implications, in this context, shared perceptions or assumptions about colleagues may help employees navigate social interactions, align expectations, and maintain a degree of predictability in the workplace. This finding aligns with study of McKenzie (2017), Zhang (2020) Bednarska and Jędrzejak (2022) that highlights the role of stereotypes in shaping workplace

behavior and group dynamics, though it is crucial to note that overreliance on stereotypes can have long-term negative effects if unchecked. A theoretical perspectives in social cognition and attribution theory suggest that stereotypes simplify complex information processing, but they often rely on overgeneralizations that may distort reality. As a result, while they may occasionally facilitate quick decision-making in workplace interactions, their use must be critically evaluated because they can also reinforce bias, limit objective judgment, and negatively affect group relations if relied upon excessively.

Secondly, halo effect has a positive and statistically significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. With the result evidence of $\beta = 0.549$, $t = 10.371$, $p < 0.000$, this indicates that employees' overall impressions of colleagues whether positive or negative significantly influence harmonious interactions. A positive halo effect may encourage cooperation, trust, and supportive behavior, fostering a more cohesive work environment. This finding is consistent with the studies of Biçer (2022), Shao (2023) and Kordsmeyer, et al., (2024) which suggest that favorable general impressions of colleagues can enhance collaboration and reduce interpersonal conflicts.

On the other hand, selective perception has an insignificant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara State. With the result

evidence of $\beta = 0.110$, $t = 1.609$, $p > 0.108$). This implies that employees' tendencies to focus on specific aspects of their colleagues' behavior, while ignoring others, do not meaningfully shape overall workplace harmony in the SMEs studied. It is possible that in these SMEs, other factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, or formal rules have a stronger influence on harmonious interactions than selective perception.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based of the findings above the study concludes that both stereotypes and halo effects are important perceptual factors that play a significant role in moderating employee's relations, judgment and harmonious coexistence within the workplace. Both variables demonstrated positive and significant effect on workplace harmony among employees of selected SMEs in Zamfara state, while selective perception appears less influential in this context. Based on this the study recommends that;

1. SMEs in Zamfara State should engaged in capacity building to reorient both employee and employers in order to reduce stereotype bias judgments, as this will at the long run solidify interpersonal relationship, support fairness and sense of belonging among employees in the workplace.
2. SMEs in Zamfara State should adopt open, clear and consistent performance appraisal structure that will reduce the biasness of personal

impression unleashed by halo effect. An open system on promotion, reward and recognition in the organization build employees confidence and performances.

3. SMEs in Zamfara State should encourage strategic management practice, this will bring sound policies formulation, effective rules and regulations that will ensure good leadership style and good workplace culture. As selective perception has insignificant effect on workplace harmony, good organizational policies and structured leadership style will enhance employee monitoring and concentration.

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