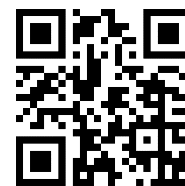


Manager Ethical Behaviour and Employee Affective Commitment



Ekeuwei, Augusta¹, Ginah, Otonye Ginah Ph.D²

¹Department of Management, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Amassoma

²Research Consultant, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Amassoma

ABSTRACT: The influence of manager behaviour on employee positive work behaviour has sought empirical evidence against the backdrop of robust conceptual and theoretical positions on the subject. Considering this debate, this study examines empirical relationship between manager ethical behaviour and employee affective commitment among SMEs operators in Port Harcourt. The study conducted based on positivist philosophy had used the validated and reliable survey instrument to obtain data from a sample of 143 respondents. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson Statistic and multiple regression. The co-efficient obtained shows a positive relationship between manager ethical conduct and employee affective commitment. The regression result indicates that up to 68% of the variance in the employee affective commitment construct is predicted by manager ethical behaviour and integrity and accountability components have the highest impact on employee affective commitment. Conclusively, manager ethical behaviour, correlates with employee affective commitment, therefore, it is recommended that manager should show integrity and accountability as a means of attracting commitment through the confidence reposed in managers known for doing the right things

KEYWORDS: Accountability, Affective, Commitment, Empowerment, Ethics, Integrity

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are getting more involved in initiating work modes and practices that will not only activate employee commitment but will deepen employee passion for attaining work goals (McKenzie, Podsakoff & Fetter, 1993; Schweitzer & Koch, 2001; Huei, Mansor & Tat, 2014). The commitment scale according to Allen and Meyer (2000) is considered affective where employees consider as peripheral individual interest and make central the goals of the organization therefore expresses functional behaviour that is critical to goal attainment.

Affective commitment symptomizes a positive psychological disposition to work tasks and goals without consideration for the pecuniary returns (Obada, 2012). Literature suggests that employees self-sacrificial gestures are often initiated as reciprocal norms resulting from either psychological empowerment for tasks and structural configuration at work, resource availability or clarity of vision amongst others (Youseff, 2000; Zangaro, 2001; Tayyeb & Riaz, 2004; Lefkowitz, 2007). Further, ample theoretical evidence suggest that manager ethical behaviour influence individual employee behaviour especially as it relates with commitment to work goals (Hannah et al, 2008; DeWit, 2013; Huang & Peterson, 2017). Ethical behaviour by managers enable their psychological feeling to live in the employee life world thereby understanding their critical perspectives and experiences.

Leadership scholars like Kanungo and Mendoca (1996); Avolio and Locke (2003); O'Shea (2004) have argued that manager transformational attitude result from innate traits that are inclined to having feelings for other peoples experiences. There is a deliberate psychology cross-match that enables common understanding between the leader and the led. This attracts a fastidious adherence to workplace ethics. Collated empirical evidence has linked manager ethical conduct with employee normative commitment in work organizations (Van Knippenberge & Goippenberg, 2000, Brown & Irevino, 2006; Grrenbaum, et al, 2014). While this form of commitment is notably obligatory therefore can be acquired through laid down work rules and regulations, it does not share common conceptual boundaries with affective commitment which is largely psychological. These debates all the same, are within conceptual proposals that require further empirical inquiry. Further search is therefore important in order to burgeon knowledge particularly on the influence of manager ethical behaviour on employee affective commitment among small and medium enterprise (SMEs) operators in Port Harcourt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Manager Ethical Behaviour

The age long position of Mary Follet (1940) on ethics at work has remained not just a fulcrum of ethical discourse in management but present the reality of ethical conduct in work organizations. Manager ethical behaviour has been conceptually described as a

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demonstration of right and fair conduct through personal actions and relationship with others, transferring and initiating same behaviour to subordinates (Brown et al, 2005). Ethical managers provides standard of behaviour templates that guide general behaviour amongst all work members. Kalshoven et al (2011) posits that ethical managers increasingly creates and develop positive shared value that positively and readily initiate work protocols that catalyze goals attainment. Manager ethical behaviour support the emergence of moral asset that model appropriate work behaviour. Ethics according to Mellan (2009) has a philosophical underlay with a unitary focus of doing good. Ethics therefore, is the basis for ensuring and encouraging good conduct. Managers with ethics orientation expectedly instill the needed confidence on work members due to his deliberate commitment to doing good through concrete display of integrity which Basa (2016) observed as a constituent of theoretical composition of manager ethical conduct. Ethics in the thinking of Phathara et al (2017) provides meaningful guidelines and rules of engagement in the organization because they clarify and guide on what is 'right'. Ethics are value oriented therefore set the template for integrity, fairness, honesty, responsibility, devotion, commitment amongst others (Lim, Qing & Shem, 2014). Rilvari et al (2012) further argues that ethical managers while demonstrating ethics, they are inspired morally towards being transparent, empowering members through creation of close relationship framework and eventually, metamorphosing into common community with positive work behaviour. Chong (2009) posits that manager ethical behaviour requires a corporate social attitude for all stakeholders, employees inclusive in order to attract psychological rearmament for commitment by stakeholders that transcend day-to-day responsibilities. Manager ethical behaviour in this wise entrench culture that is targeted at ensuring a positive and extra – role work behaviour.

EMPLOYEE AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

Employee loyalty to the organization is considered strategic in achieving goals therefore same dosage of vigour has been put into the discourse on employee commitment (Bateman & Straner, 1984; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Peteraf, 1993; Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Barney et al, 2011). Attainment of goals requires employee willingness to exert effort and undertake roles that optimize potentials at goals for the organization (Sirmon, et al 2011). In defining employee commitment Allen and Meyer (1990) noted that employee commitment is a psychological state with capacity to determine employee relationship with the organization and continued stay with the organization. Beyond defining the concept, Allen and Meyer (1990) were assertive on its multidimensionality with three distinct factors that describes the construct which were mentioned as affective, continuance and normative. This paper has its interest on affective commitment aspect of the employee commitment discourse. For Meyer and Allen (1997) affective commitment represents a state of emotional attachment and identification with the organization hence involvement in the goals of the organization. It is induced by individual psychological connection with the goals and values of the organization thereby willing to continue with it (Uha, 2011). Affective commitment has been further conceptualized by Sheldon (2000) as an attitude or orientation towards the organization that gets the individual employee thoroughly linked with the organization without the instrumental worth considered Affective commitment is expressed through a passionate feeling to align with the organizational goals with a view that they provide satisfaction and means to achieve individual goals. Messner and Schafer (2012) observed that affective commitment is triggered by multiple work place factors like role clarity, goal clarity, peer cohesion, participation amongst others. These influencing factors though noted as plausible, there is imperative need for further expansion of search for predictors of affective commitment in work organizations.

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Much of the recent contribution by researchers in the field of organizational behaviour are showing incisive concern for getting employee support through managerial conduct and how they beckon on positive organizational behaviour (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Tayyeb & Riaz, 2004; Sheldon, 2009). Some of the studies had however shown that going by the position of Habib and Allas (2011) on two-way effect of pro-social behaviour, manager ethical behaviour is not likely to correlate with employee affective commitment. The author argues that when managers demonstrate high adherence to ethic protocols, he will not necessarily attract support of all work members especially deviant employees. Ethical behaviour requires that rules and regulations are complied with in addition to showing devotion to organizational responsibilities. Infact, Vits and Gelden (2011) posits that manager ethical behaviour compels obligatory commitment and not necessarily pro-social or extra-role behaviour amongst employees. Kilsby (2012) believed different employees hold different orientation on meaning of work therefore ethical behaviour for those whose work orientation is that of means to end are likely to disregard commitment for more relaxed and passive attitudes. Classical theorists Zhu and Sarkis (2004), Cao and Cao (2007), Mittra and Datta (2014) are more inclined to the fact that ethics at work are compulsory value protocols and procedures that ensure formal conduct and behaviour. In otherwords, where ethics are demonstrably deficient, commitment is likely to be lacking in turn. There is quite dearth of empirical evidence affirming the belief that manager ethical behaviour enlist employee affective commitment. Therefore this study hypothesis thus:

Ho: *Manager ethical behaviour relates significantly with employee affective commitment.*

METHODOLOGY

The research is positivist oriented therefore data collection and analytical approaches are nomothetic. Simply, a quantitative, correlational and cross-sectional survey designs are applicable. The cross-sectional design ensures a snap shot of the respondents,

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generating data using the scaled questionnaire instrument. For correlational design, it established the relationship and association between examined variables which in this study is manager ethical behaviour and employee affective commitment. The survey instrument was administered on a sample of 167 respondents from a list of SMEs (production and food processing) drawn from the SMEDAN schedule of SMEs operating within Port Harcourt metropolis. Before the administration of the survey instrument, the managers had invited all employees and encouraged them to participate in the study. This approach has helped to build confidence and they were also convinced about researcher's commitment to research ethics of confidentiality. The process encouraged and enhanced the retrieval of 143 of the survey instrument representing 85.6% success rate.

MEASURES

To measure the manager ethical behaviour, we had relied on Mellan (2009) questionnaire with high psychometric rating. Using all 24 items of the scale, it proved appropriate for the current study. The scale was previously examined for reliability which showed 0.71 by Basa (2016). For this study, the four dimensions on manager ethical behaviour namely, integrity, community orientation; empowerment and accountability have reliabilities Cronbach alphas as 0.73; 0.71; 0.77 and 0.84 respectively. Sample items included: my managers keeps to promises made to employees consistently and my manager ensure that they relate closely and support each other. Responses are on the Likert scale ranging from 5 – Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree for Employee Affective Commitment; the Allen & Meyer (1996), 7 item scale for affective commitment in particular was used. This was deployed in Naicker (2008) and had a high reliability alpha of 0.92. Respondents here are expected to respond using the 5 point Likert scale of 5-Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive, Correlation and Cronbach alpha Results for Manager Ethical Behaviour and Employee Affective Commitment (EAC)

S/No	Construct	Mean	Std	1	2	3	4	5
1	Integrity	4.01	0.774	(0.73)				
2	Community orientation	3.97	0.627	.561	(0.71)			
3	Empowerment	4.21	0.643	.442	.363	(0.77)		
4	Accountability	3.74	0.721	.610	.318	.506	(0.84)	
5	EAC	3.86	0.602	.422**	.457**	.386**	.633**	(0.81)

** Correlation sig @0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2: Regression Results on Examined Variables Manager Ethical Behaviour and Employee Affective Commitment

Variables	β	S.E	t-value	Sig	VIF
Integrity	0.462	0.063	2.661	0.000**	1.182
Community orientation	0.042	0.038	0.470	0.211	1.421
Empowerment	-0.132	0.072	1.209	0.031	1.594
Accountability	0.281	0.073	1.844	0.000**	1.333
R	.830				
R ²	.680				
Adj R ²	.629				
F	62.1253				
Std Error of Estimate	3.75101				

Dependent Variable: Employee Affective Commitment

The results indicate all the manager ethical behaviour components relates significantly with the employee affective commitment. As shown, accountability ($r=0.633$; $p<0.01$) and community orientation ($r=0.457$; $p<0.01$) were positively and significantly related and this was also the case of integrity and empowerment with correlation co-efficient $r = 0.422$ and $r = 0.422$ and $r = 0.38$ with $p<0.01$ respectively.

The regression analysis was conducted to find out the strength of manager ethical behaviour on predicting employee affective commitment. The results indicate that a strong positive and significant relationship exists between manager ethical practice and affective commitment. It is indicated by $R = 0.830$. The $R^2 = 0.680$ indicates that up to 68% of the behaviour of the regressand (employee affective commitment) is predicted by the regressor (manager ethical behaviour) while the remaining is out this model. Further, amongst the components of the construct, integrity with $\beta = 0.462$ α $t = 2.661$ was found to be most important in

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explaining the variance in employee affective commitment and this was followed by accountability with $\beta = 0.281$ $\alpha t = 1.844$. This also suggests that increase in integrity by ethical managers, will also lead to increase in employee affective commitment and same for accountability and community orientation.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study is to examine the empirical relationship between manager ethical behaviour and employee affective commitment. The findings of this study are interestingly epochal in providing support for theoretical composition of manager ethics construct (Mitta & Datta, 2014). The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge by showing that manager ethical behaviour has a relationship with employee affective commitment. The results indicate that when employees observe commitment to ethical behaviour by managers showing integrity, equity, fairness and accountability they expectedly display affective commitment to the organization. On the other hand, when employees perceive that manager ethical adherence is low, and do not exemplify virtues of good conduct, their reciprocal intention to support voluntarily is likely to be withdrawn.

This also provides support for the claims by Madi and Irissa (2016) that ethical leader is that leader with premium for moral conviction and values. The findings of this study require a comprehensive template on the personality of managers. When managers personality profile is characteristically profound in ethical practices, they are seen by subordinates as role models therefore will be passionate about the attainment of the goals of the organization and will assist in enhancing the corporate reputation of organizations.

CONCLUSION/PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As part of the continuous search for what organizational aspects and actions are likely to attract employee wholesome commitment to work goals, this study has primarily investigated the empirical relationship between manager ethical conduct and employee affective commitment. Ethical behaviour of managers is examined using such components as integrity, community orientation, empowerment and accountability. The results of this study specifically indicates that managers ethical behaviour will reciprocally attract affective commitment from employees. It means that when managers are inclined to ethical practices it triggers positive psychological orientation laced with passion for attaining work goals therefore the study made a lucid conclusion that manager ethical behaviour correlates with employee affective commitment. The practical implications emerging from the study result is that the study provides empirical evidence on the role of manager ethical behaviour on affective commitment. When managers show integrity and accountability, it will no doubt instill a sense of confidence on employees who see the manager as a role model and mentor. Employees with a feel of empowerment, psychologically translate their tasks as being meaningful to overall goal and also having the competence to undertake task. As ethically behaved managers promote oneness, a cohesive work climate that attract all member support for goals is also built. The long-term outcome of course, is a passionately committed workforce that undertake work tasks not necessarily for financial benefits but for the love of attaining work goals.

SUGGESTED FOR FURTHER STUDIES

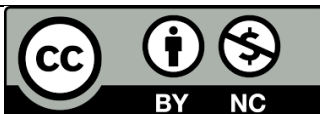
It is commonly known that imperfectness exist in human actions therefore this research study is not an exception. Thus, it is imperative to direct attention to future scientific inquiries. For the measurement of the construct, though attempts have been made to identify the appropriate dimension and measures, we do not claim exhaustiveness. In other words, they can be further modified to suit context and perhaps explore and ones. It will also be of interest that the study be conducted in a different work context considering distinct industry factors that are likely to shape outcomes.

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