

Managerial Ethical Behaviour And Employee Commitment In Public Service

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Abstract: *The survival of any service organization hinges on its employees' commitment thus, the paper examined the influence of managerial ethical behaviour on employee commitment in the Bayelsa State civil service. Adopting a descriptive correlation design, questionnaires were distributed to a sample population of 356 employees using simple random sampling techniques. From the distributed sample, only 178 copies of the instrument were correctly filled and returned. These returned data were subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the outcome revealed that managerial ethical behaviour in the form of transparency, responsibility and accountability had positive relationship with employee commitment. The paper concluded that managerial ethical behaviour is a strong stimulant to employee engagement in the Bayelsa State civil service. It therefore recommended, for public service recruitment and selection processes to be strengthened in terms of transparency so as to ensure employment of leaders who demonstrate professionalism and competence in their leadership and management role.*

Keywords: accountability, commitment, responsibility, social learning, transparency,

Introduction

In today's competitive world each organization is confronting new difficulties in regards to maintaining efficiency and creating committed workforce (Andavar, et al., 2020). Presently there is no organization that can perform at top levels unless every employee is focused on the organization's goals. Thus, employee commitment is an individual's mental connection to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Employee commitment predicts work variables, for example, turnover, hierarchical citizenship conduct, and employment execution. A percentage of the elements, such as part stretch, work shakiness and employability, strengthening, and appropriation of authority have been appeared to be associated with a worker feeling of organizational commitment (Abdullah & Othman, 2019).

Nguyen (2014) opined that employee's employee commitment plays a vital role in employee stability and better customer service hence increases business performance. According to Brown and Mitchell (2010) high employee commitment towards organization increases the job satisfaction among employees, job performance, overall productivity, sales and also high employee commitment decreases employee turnover, intention to leave and absenteeism. Despite the scholarly claims on the relevance of committed employees to any organization, Nischal (2018) argued that negative behaviour such as greed, corruption, bribery, discrimination in employment, sexual harassment, stereotyping, religious disparity, gender inequality, role ambiguity, nepotism, favourism, organizational politics, position intimidation, unrealistic and conflicting goals, poor leadership style, are found to be destructive to work commitment in the organization. To address, these negative behavioural outcomes causing low and or lack of employee commitment among public servants in organizations with specific emphasis to low income countries like Nigeria, Chrisantus (2017) advocated for the adoption of managers' ethical behaviour practices.

Manager ethical behaviour has been described as the expression of behaviour that meets appropriate norms. Ethical managers achieve this through personal conduct and interactive relationships with subordinates; they must also advance this behaviour to their subordinates through mutual interaction, emphasis and decisiveness (Brown, et al., 2005 in Chrisantus, 2017). Thus, an ethical manager must first be a morally upright person and additionally, be a moral manager by engendering moral behaviour among followers. As an application of principles such as justice and truthfulness to the business world (Chrisantus (2017), or as a set of laws relating to competition which guarantee fairness in the market and restrict practices that violate the rights of employees, shareholders, and customers (Obiwuru, et al., 2011), managerial ethics stands to be the corner stone to enhancing employee commitment among civil servants in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The role of ethical behaviour in the creation of a functional organizational culture that nurtures high employee commitment cannot be overemphasised. Thus, the paper examines the influence of managerial ethical behaviour on employee commitment in Bayelsa State civil service hence, the hypothetical propositions below:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between transparency and employee commitment in Bayelsa, State civil service.

H₀₂: Responsibility has no significant relationship with employee commitment in Bayelsa, State civil service.

H₀₃: Accountability has no significant relationship with employee commitment in Bayelsa, State civil service.

Literature Review

Managerial 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 literature but present the reality of ethical conduct in work organizations. Manager ethical behaviour has been conceptually described as a 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 provide standard of behaviour templates that guide general behaviour amongst all work members. However, managers with ethics orientation expectedly instil 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 Wesarat, et al., (2017) provides meaningful guidelines and rules of engagement in the organization because they clarify and guide on what is right, fairness and honest).

Manager ethical behavior is a behavior that is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others. It is thus related to concepts such as trust, integrity, honesty, consideration, equal treatment, charisma and fairness (Agha, et al., 2017). Ethical behavior among business managers is a clarion call to the recent credit crisis, the worst global recession since the 1930s; and the various scandals in former leading corporate business organizations. There are many businesses in the developed countries where managers failed ethically for a variety of reasons, which may include pressures to achieve, perform and to "win at all costs" (Bello, 2012). However, if leaders are perceived to be ruthless and inconsiderate in their business dealings with others, employees are likely to get the message too (Crane & Matten, 2007). Employees often want to be associated with managers that are honest, credible, respectful, and fair (Kouzes & Posner, 2007 in Collins, 2010).

Organizations can achieve better employee attraction and retention when employees have the opportunity to work for truly responsible and ethical employers (Upadhyay & Singh, 2010; Collins & Hussey, 2014). Hence, managers need to shape attitude of individuals in order to be ethical so as to realize the expected performance (Ndababaliye, 2013) for their organizations. The aim is to identify both the rules that should govern people's behaviour and the "goals" that are worth seeking.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment has become an increasingly important issue for organizations due to the desire to keep talented employees (Dinc & Aydemir, 2014) more often because personal commitment is associated with parameters such as absenteeism, turnover, burnout, job satisfaction, and individual or organizational performance. This study proposed employee commitment as a positive outcome of ethical leadership. Employee commitment is defined as an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in his or her organization – a sense of loyalty which leaves one fully adapted to accept a company's goals and values as his or her own (Mahdi, et al., 2014). The definition of employee commitment from a loyalty perspective has been supported by (Luthans, 2011) who proposes that employee commitment is an attitude that reflects employee loyalty to their organization.

Employee commitment can therefore be examined in terms of the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and wants to continue actively participating in it hence, Newstrom (2011) described it as a measure of an employee's willingness to remain with the firm in the future. Employee commitment is defined as a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization and is a three -dimensions concept. First, affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Second continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Third, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment (Castaing, 2006).

The attitude theorists view commitment as something of a 'black box', the contents of which are determined by a range of organizational and individual factors such as personal characteristics, role-related features, structural characteristics and work experiences (Oliver, 2005). Indeed, majority organizational commitment studies have been concerned on compensated employee rather than focused on nonprofit worker (Rahmawati, et al., 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977, which emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. However, the theory is suggested to be a strong learning tool in the study of ethical conduct since managers and leaders, through acting in accordance with ethical

behaviour, influence followers by acting upon a normative desired behaviour which is seen as legit and attractive. If ethical behaviour is the ultimate goal of a manager's behaviour, by acting on legitimate and credible behaviours, then managers become attractive to subordinates by expressing a normative desired behaviour such as commitment in the organization or institution. This implies that when managers act accordingly, subordinates end up being motivated to imitate the same conduct by altruistic, rather than selfish reasons. These behaviours, characterizing an ethical behaviour of managers, can include elements of showing respect to others and treat people fairly in the workplace.

Ethical managers thus model ethical behaviour, which later becomes the target of subordinates or lower employees identification processes which ultimately encourages commitment and citizenship behaviour in the organisation as a whole (Brown et al., 2005). Recurring in managers ethical behaviour literature is the concept of imitating others, emerging from social learning theory, in terms of role modelling (Bachmann, 2017; Hassan, et al., 2013). Role models are often used by individuals to guide actions and to steer identification (Weaver et al., 2005). Ethical managers influence followers by representing an ethical role model, and through implementing sanctions and rewards they guide ethical conduct.

Methodology

The study adopted the interpretivist research philosophy because of its ability to understanding human nature and social interactions of individuals and their social roles in accordance with the researcher's own understanding or perspective. The paper makes use of descriptive correlation research design because it explains what is in existence and in turn assists in revealing new realities and meanings that broadening the scope of the phenomenon under study. However, a sample population of 356 employees drawn from the operational workforce of the Bayelsa State Civil Service (Due Process Office) nominal roll of February, 2022 with a simple random sampling technique used during instrumentation. The questionnaire instrument was adapted from Emily (2013) for transparency, Martins (2015) for responsibility and accountability while employee commitment was adapted from Allen and Meyer (1997). All these components were measured on a 5-item statements though, modify to suit the local environment where the study is conducted. However, the collected data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of SPSS.

Result and Analysis

Demographic Profile

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	81	45.5
Male	97	55.5
Working Experience		
Below 5 years	41	23.0
6-10 years	78	43.8
11-above years	59	33.1
Educational Qualification		
SSCE	-	-
OND/NCE	33	18.5
HND/BSc	102	57.3
MSc/PhD	29	16.3
Others	14	7.9

Source: Survey Data, 2025.

The gender distribution of respondents as captured in the table shows that 55.5% of the respondents were male while 45.5% were female. This implies that the respondents were made up of more male than female. It was also revealed that 23.0% of the respondents had work experience of between 1-5 years, 43.8% of the respondents had work experience of between 6-10 years, 33.1% of the respondents had work experience of between 11years and above. However, majority of the respondents had work experience of between 6-10 years. The result on educational qualification revealed that SSCE had no response, 18.5% respondents were either OND or NCE holders, 57.3% were either BSc or HND holders, 16.3% had a master's degree or Ph.D., and 7.9% had other forms of educational qualification. This shows that more of the respondents were either BSc or HND holders.

Bivariate Result

The result of the propose hypotheses are presented below:

		Correlations			
		Transparency	Responsibility	Accountability	Employee Commitment
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	1	-.161**	.272**	.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.000	.000
	N	178	178	178	178
Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	-.161**	1	.414**	.549***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.000	.000
	N	178	178	178	178
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.414**	1	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	178	178	178	178
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.434**	.549**	.601*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	178	178	178	178

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the bivariate outcome on the first proposition revealed that transparency had positive correlation with employee commitment as $\rho = .434^{**}$ and also significant @ $[p = 0.000 < 0.01]$. This implies that the null hypothesis stated above is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship transparency and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service. Also the result in the second proposition, $\rho = .549^{**}$, it shows a positive relationship between responsibility and employee commitment. It is also significant @ $[p = 0.000 < 0.01]$ implying that the null hypothesis stated above is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between responsibility and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service

The result for the third proposition above, where $\rho = .601^{**}$, shows a positive relationship between accountability and employee commitment. It is also significant @ $[p = 0.000 < 0.01]$. This implies that the null hypothesis stated above is rejected therefore, there is a significant relationship between accountability and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the first empirical test revealed that there is a significant relationship between transparency and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service. This result affirmed the outcome of Kandiah and Shanthakumary (2019), whose study investigated the relationship between employees' perception of transparency in management and their affective commitment by focusing on four dimensions of management transparency: openness, accountability, integrity and participation. Findings revealed that the relationship between employees' perception of transparency and affective commitment was significantly and strongly correlated. It was also identified that the components of transparency such as openness, accountability integrity and participation explain the variations in employee commitment. On the second proposition, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between responsibility and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service. The finding is in agreement with the result of Akpana and Amanda (2022) who examined managerial integrity and employee commitment in organization.

The findings from available literature revealed that there is positive relationship between managerial responsibility/integrity and employment commitment in manufacturing firms. This explains the reason why civil servants are committed to duty when they perceive an increased in their superiors' responsibility to working ethics in the commission. Finally, it was found that accountability significantly correlate with employee commitment in the Bayelsa State Civil Service. This result is in conformity with the study outcome of Ghanem and Castelli (2019), whose study holds that accountability and moral competence are two factors that have a positive effect on ethical leadership in organizations. This study utilized a survey methodology to investigate the relationship among accountability, moral competence, and ethical leadership in a sample of 103 leaders from a variety of industries in different countries. Accountability was found to be a significant positive predictor of ethical leadership. Moral competence was also found to moderate this relationship such that increases in moral competence enhanced the positive effects of accountability on ethical leadership.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Ethical issue is a worldwide phenomenon and thus, remains an important issue to corporate organization therefore, managers must take proactive measures to deactivate its existence in the public service. Managers have the ability to bring different positive outcomes from employees such as committed work behaviour and increased employee engagement. Thus, this study was empirically carried out to examine the relationship between manager ethical behaviour and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service. The outcome of this study gives more emphasis on managers' ethical behaviour which can bring commitment from the employees, by developing three dimensions of manager ethical behaviour such as transparency, responsibility and accountability to measure employee commitment. These established dimensions and the measures of employee commitment comprehensively formed the study's specific objectives and research questions. An analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics, of which it produced clear findings which revealed that the dimensions of manager ethical behaviour (transparency, responsibility and accountability) has a positive and significant relationship with the measures of employee commitment; thus, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between manager ethical behaviour and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service. On the basis of this conclusion, it was recommended as follows:

- Public service recruitment and selection processes should be strengthened to be transparent so as to ensure employment of leaders who demonstrate professionalism and competence in their leadership and management role.
- Top managers in Bayelsa State Civil Service should endeavour to adopt responsibility as an ethical behaviour indicator as it helps to improve the quality and increase employees' sense of commitment. It will benefit not only the managers and employees but also the organization as a whole in the achievement of organizational growth and success globally.
- Managers should embrace training as change agents and act as role models in order to create positive influence on their employees to further enhance their commitment to performance.

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