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Framework for Employee Commitment Using Organizational Culture and Organizational Justice Variables

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Abstract:

This paper examines and evaluates the framework for employee commitment using organizational culture and organizational justice variables. Commitment of workers in an organization is very important for productivity. This productivity comes when there is defined organizational culture, organizational justice and well defined strategy for the integration into the organizational dynamics. A framework for proper implementation of the strategy was developed which include leadership, organizational systems and procedures and human resources policies were identified and discussed.

Keywords: Organizational culture, organizational justice, employee commitment.

1. Introduction

The concern of most organizations is to achieve the goals, vision and mission of the organization. In an effort to achieve the stated goals, organizations develop many strategies and implement methodologies that enhance productivity; Child (1972) posits that resources and type of strategy interact to produce result. Organizations in this circumstance employ both tangible resources such as financial and physical assets and intangible resources such as human resources and culture in the formation and implementation of their selected strategy. The intangible resources are more likely than tangible resources to position the organization on a better competitive advantage. They tend to have the characteristics of being rare and difficult to imitate.

The application and implementation of both the tangible and intangible resources take place within an environment and managers are usually required to tailor their practices and create a culture that would complement the strategy. Organizations are replete with competing ideologies and goals that result from uncertainty and turbulent environments like complex technologies, threatening political climates and competitive businesses. As a result, managers sift through incomplete or conflicting stories, observations and opinions from these trends in the organization to make sense out of the dynamics in them and their relationships to the environment. This milieu of uncertainty is the foundation upon which organizational cultures arise to provide a framework within which shared meanings are developed.

Even as these shared meanings are developed, it should be noted that businesses and organizations are economic institutions. As economic institutions, financial destinies of individuals are determined by the organization. The sense of duty that goes beyond narrow defined exchanges account significantly to the growth and development of the organization. Members' perception and sense of moral propriety of how they are treated are the factors that allow people to work together effectively no matter the shared meaning, interpretation and understanding within the organization. Justice defines the very essence of individual relationship to employers and adds value to the espoused myth, ceremonials and norms that determine the organizational cultural fabric (Gilliland 2011).

Organizational justice provides the opportunity for a personal evaluation of the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct. Organizational justice establishes the framework for the evaluation of fairness in the workplace and assessment of different attitudes of the employees like obedience, loyalty, adherence to norms and values, trust, leadership and organizational commitment (Byrne 2005). Employees usually feel more satisfied when they felt they were rewarded with justice for the work they have done especially when these rewards were for genuine contributions to the organization and were consistent with the rewards policies. The consistency of the reward policy is usually anchored on the organizational culture and strategy. This perception of fairness and equity makes the employee to be committed to the ideals of the organization. These ideals include the vision, mission and cultural prescriptions of the organization.

This paper invariably looks at framework for employee commitment using organizational culture and organizational justice variables. Efforts will be made to identify organizational cultural practices, norms and values and its implication on employee commitment. More so, the process of justice dispensation in an organization will be discussed and its effect on employee commitment. The concepts involved will be discussed extensively to determine and examine the role of each to employee commitment.

2. Organizational Culture: Conceptualization

Organizational culture is a widely used term but also one that seems to give rise to a degree of ambiguity. Industrial and organizational psychologists studying organizations suggest the concept of culture as the climate and practices that organizations develop in the process of managing workers or the promoted values and statement of beliefs of an organization (Schein, 2004). Good organizational managers create and manage culture and the quality of the manager is evaluated from the ability to understand and work with organizational culture and also destroy it when it is viewed as dysfunctional.

Culture gives organizations a sense of identity and determines, through the organization's legends, rituals, beliefs, meanings, value, norms, ceremonies and languages, the ways things are done in the organization. Organizational culture is the ideas, customs, skills, arts, beliefs and attitudes of employees in an organization (Stewart 2007).

An organization's culture encapsulates what the organization has been good at and what has worked in the past. Over time, the organization develops norms which are established behavior pattern. Culture points to phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious. Schein (1990) emphasizes that there are visible and invisible levels of corporate culture. The visible levels incorporate observable symbols, ceremonies, stories, slogans, behaviours, dress and physical settings. The invisible levels include beliefs, attitudes and feelings.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) emphasize the visible levels of culture like rites, rituals, legends shape behavior but the invisible levels determine and influence employee commitment. Rousseau (1990) provided a multilayered model to defining the attributes of culture. Rousseau's rings are organized from readily accessible (outer layer) too difficult to access (inner layer). Rousseau's model appears to capture all the key elements of culture: a continuum from unconscious to conscious, from interpretative to behavior, from inaccessible to accessible.

Organizational culture can be seen also from superficial aspects such as patterns of behavior and observable symbols and ceremonies and more deep rooted and underlying values, assumptions and beliefs. Hofstede (1980) infers that organizational culture instills collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another. Wiesner (2002) sees it as a way of looking at organizations by its shared values and behaviour. Accordingly, the behavior provides attitudes and logical processes which provide cognitive maps for people within a given societal group to perceive, think, reason, act, react and interact.

For the purpose of this writing, organizational culture refers to a set of symbols, ceremonies and myth that communicates the underlying values and beliefs of the organization to its employees. The work of Schein (1984) and Hofstede (1980) had been central to bringing the concept of organizational culture to the stage of organizational development and commitment. This commitment by the employees is hinged on the fact that once employees get used to a culture, they begin to develop a protective instinct against any change. Under this circumstance, cultural prescriptions that encourage employee commitment become so strong and employees form a defensive or non-adaptive strategy to protect the culture. Thus organizational culture that fosters employee commitment is stable in its vision, values and mission and also flexible in structure and operations.

Rabson (2007:27) suggests that organizational culture constitutes the company's identity, by creating a common culture, not only is a sense of pride among staff created, but also a sense of belonging and ownership. This sense of ownership propagates commitment. Mullins (2005) explains that the applications of organizational behavior and the effective management of human resources are dependent on the characteristic features of the individual organization and its culture. The pervasive nature of culture in terms of how things are done here and common values, beliefs, and attitudes have significant effect on organizational processes such as decision making, design of structure, group behavior, work organization, motivation and employee commitment. Organizational culture defines the attitude of employees towards the organization, organizational property and other workers. The attitudes provide the trail for other behavioral components to follow.

3. Dimensions of Organizational Culture

Many scholars have expounded different dimensions of organizational culture. Two major ones that have been recognized are Hofstede (1980) and Schein's (1985). For this work, Hofstede's dimensions of culture are adopted due to the following reasons; Hofstede's dimensions have been one of the pioneers in culture studies and also Hofstede's dimensions have been used by many researchers in many countries. More so, its dimensions have appropriate construct validity.

The four dimensions of culture values are power distance; which is the extent to which the less powerful members of an organization accept that power is distributed unequally, the second dimension is uncertainty avoidance. This implies the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions that they try to avoid. Individualism/collectivism is the third dimension which reflects an ethnic position of the culture, in which people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate families, or a situation in which people belong to groups or collectives which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty. The final dimension is the masculinity/femininity. This dimension looks at a situation in which dominant values are success, money, and professions as opposed to the situation in which the dominant values are caring for others and the quality of life.

According to Hofstede (1980), the above-mentioned dimensions are identified as national culture values. These are values that were learned during early childhood and they remain strong enduring beliefs, which were unlikely to change throughout the person's life.

It is important to note at this point that there is no acceptable type of organizational culture. Different organizations have distinctive cultures. Also, there may be more than one culture within organizations. For the purpose of this work, the types proposed in Bradley and Parker's (2006) competing values Framework (C.V.F), based on work by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) is adopted.

The competing values framework examines the competing demands within organizations between their internal and external environments in the one hand and between control and flexibility on the other (Bradley and Parker, 2001). These conflicting demands constitute the two axes of the competing value model. Organizations with an internal focus emphasize integration, information

management and communication, whereas organizations with an external focus emphasize growth, resource acquisition and interaction with the external environment.

On the second dimension of conflicting demands, organizations with a focus on control emphasize stability and cohesion while organization with a focuses on flexibility emphasize adaptability and spontaneity. Combined, these two dimensions of competing values map out four major types of organizational culture which include internal model, open system model, human relation model and rational model.(Zammito, Gifford and Goodman, 1999).

4. Organizational Justice; Conceptualization

Organizational justice is a subjective and descriptive concept in that it captures what individuals believe to be right, rather than an objective reality or a prescriptive moral code. It is a personal evaluation about the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct. It follows then that justice requires management to take the perspective of the employee and understand properly the events that engender this subjective feeling of organizational justice. Organizational justice enables employees to estimate now how they are likely to be treated over time. Employees prefer justice because it allows them to predict and control the outcomes they are likely to receive from organizations. Justice provides the certainty regarding future benefits. The benefits can be monetary gains, awards, status gain, promoting and other perquisites (Fernandes and Awameh, 2006).

Greenberg (1990) suggested that organizational justice explain many organizational behavior outcome variables. The retaliation against inequitable outcomes or inappropriate processes and interactions can be linked to organizational justice. People are naturally attentive to the justice of events and situations in their everyday lives, across a variety of contexts (Gopanzano, 2009). Individuals react to actions and decisions made by organizations every day. An individual's perceptions of these decisions as fair or unfair can influence the individuals' subsequent attitudes and behavior (Owolabi 2012). Fairness is often of central interest in organizations because the implications of perceptions of injustice can impact job attitudes and behaviours at work. Greenberg (1986) categorized organizational justice around taxonomy namely: a reactive-proactive dimension and a process-content dimension. The reactive productive dimension focuses on employee's attempts to avoid or escape from a situation that is perceived as unfair. Some of the actions may be to force management to treat employees equally or to engage in behavior that could compensate the employee's mental distortion of unequal treatment of finally leaving the organization or not committed to the vision of the organization. Process content dimension focuses on the process through which decisions that are regarded as unfair by employees are arrived at. The justice motive theory by Lerner (1980) identifies four factors usually considered by people when taking decisions about fairness to include competition, parity, equity and making justice.

5. The Components of Organizational Justice

Greenberg and Baron; (2003) identified three components of organizational justice. They are the distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes that an individual received from the organization. It is the perceived fairness of the amounts of compensation employees receive (Folger and Konovsky,1989) It focuses on the fairness of the evaluations received relative to the work performed. Cropanzano (2007) distinguish three allocation rules that lead to distributive justice if they are applied appropriately: equality (to each the same), equity (to each in accordance with contributions) and need (to each in accordance with the most urgency). Distributive justice is concerned with the reality that not all workers are treated; the allocation of outcome is differentiated in workplace. Another significant component of organizational justice is procedural justice. It refers to the meaning/process by which outcomes are allocated, but not specifically to the outcomes themselves. Its emphasis is on the perceived fairness of the means used to determine the amount of benefits (Folger and Konovsky 1989). Warner (2005) asserts that procedural justice often is more predictive of a variety of work attitudes including organizational commitment which this work is examining. The fairness of the decision making process seems to be more important than the actual amount of compensation that is received by individual (Teprstra and Honoree 2008). Cropazano (2007 argued that fair process leads to intellectual and emotional recognition this in turn, creates the trust and commitment that build voluntary cooperation in strategy execution.

Interactional justice as a component of organizational justice focuses on the fairness of interpersonal treatment the employee receives from the decision maker. It refers to how one person treats another. A person is interactively just if he or she appropriately shares information and avoids rude or cruel remarks

6. Employee Commitment: Conceptualization

The concept of employee commitment has grown in popularity in the literature of industrial/organizational psychology and organization behaviour over the past two decades

(Chung, 2001).Much of this interest is simply because of the idea that employee commitment is an important part of the employee's psychosocial state as employees who experience high work commitment are theorized to engage in much behavior such as citizenship activities and high job performance which are beneficial to the organization. Employee commitment focuses on the psychological attachment of the employee to the work, the possible factors contributing to this attachment and the consequences of this attachment, Steers (1977) proposes that the more committed the employee is to the work, the more effort will be expended by that employee in performing work-related tasks. Employee commitment is rooted in the fundamental belief that relationships exist between the commitment of employees and their performance on the job (Brown, 1996). Employee commitment is an employee attitude or a force that binds the employee to the organization.

Commitment is complex and continuous, and requires employers to discover ways of enhancing the work life of their employees. The performance benefits accruable from increased employee commitment can be seen in the following: increased job satisfaction

(Vandenberg & Lance 1992), increased job performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), increased total return to shareholders, increased sales (Berber 1999), decreased employee turnover (Cohen 1991), decrease intention to leave (Balfour & Wechsler, 1986), decreased intention to search for alternative employers (Cohen, 1993) and decreased absenteeism (Cohen, 1993, Barber 1999). Organizations who have difficulty in retaining and replacing competent and committed employees find it hard to optimize performance.

Meyer and Allen (1991) identify three types or components of employee commitment as (1) Affective commitment (2) Normative commitment (3) Continuance commitment.

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment of the employee to the organization such that the employee identifies with, is involved, and enjoys membership in the organization. Employees who have high levels of organizational identification have enhanced feelings of belongingness to the organization. Affective committed employees have strong interest in the organization and display high level of psychological ownership.

Normative commitment reflects a perceived obligation to remain in the organization. It is based on a sense of obligation to the organization and employees with strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so. O'Reilly and Chapman (1986) see normative commitment as a result of congruence between an individual and organizational values.

The third component of organizational commitment which is based on Becker's (1960) side-bet theory is continuance commitment. The theory states that as individuals remain in the employment of an organization for longer periods, they accumulate investments, which become costly to lose the longer the individual stays. These investments include time, job effort, organization specific skill that might not be transferable or greater costs of leaving the organization that discourage them from seeking alternative employment, work friendships and political deals. Accordingly, employee commitment depends on personal factors, organizational factors and non-organizational factors.

7. Relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Commitment:

Research on the relationship between organizational culture and employee commitment had increased substantially during the past two decades (Lim, 1995). Organizational culture which is the typical shared beliefs, values and practices of an organization sets the pace for the type of commitment the employee will exhibit. Studies by Deal and Kennedy (1982) suggested that employee commitment is enhanced by strong shared values, norms and ceremonials. Organizational characteristics which the organizational culture anchors provide the platform for organizational level analysis that induces perception of organizational support that elicits employee commitment. Organizational culture provides the framework for interpretation of organizational goals, vision and mission in which the employee will be committed to. Organizational culture provides the ideals of the organization and the necessary organizational climate in which the employees thrive with. Peters and Waterman (1982) opined that high performance organizations could be distinguished from low performance firms because of the possession of cultural traits and strong culture that propels employee commitment. Dennison and Mishra (1995) in a study to identify organizational cultural traits that enhance employee commitment noted that adaptability, mission, involvement and consistency were the most potent cultural traits in employee commitment. In another study authored by Kotter and Heskett of Harvard business school, it was reported that firm's performance enhancing cultures grew their net income 765% between 1977 and 1988 as compared with 1% for firms without performance enhancing cultures over the same period (Gallagher et al 2008).

MacCarthaigh's study of organizational values (2008) found that informal and formal methods of communicating values were favored by many employees who participated in three workshops on values. The study findings also emphasize the need to centralize employee values to be an internal part of both a formal method of induction for new recruits through role play and informally through examples and on-the-training provided the organization. Leadership commitment and culture awareness training are important in relation to culture management and employee commitment development. Organizational culture helps to indoctrinate the vision and organizational culture throughout the management team and the organization. It helps to keep employees focused and to manage the change process that will be witnessed in the level of commitment. Watson (2006) emphasizes an important trend in managerial thinking which encourages managers to try to create strong organizational culture that will help them in the struggle for control because it has been recognized that when employees subscribe to the beliefs inscribed in the corporate vision, they willingly yield themselves to the goals and become affectively committed to the organization.

Schein (2004) stated that organizational culture and employee commitment are conceptually intertwined. This is supported by O'Farrell (2006) in his analysis of the Australian public service, where he found that statements of values, codes of conduct, principles of public service management, ceremonials, myths and legends are important consonants for employee commitment but must be glued to a strong leadership.

Creating a climate for change- In terms of creating a climate for change, organizational culture is only effective if it is applied to the relevant areas needing employee commitment and transformation or is tied to some organizational issue. Proper understanding of the determinants of cultural behaviour is important in the creation of employee commitment. Employee commitment agenda which are not congruent with the cultural ethos of an organization can often deliver perverse results.

Organizational culture has significant correlation with employee commitment. Employee commitment dwells within the confines of organizational climate that is provided by the existing organizational culture. The two concepts are totally intertwined and inextricable.

8. Relationship between Organizational Justice and Employee Commitment

Organizational justice is very important for the success of every organization. In order to keep employees committed, satisfied and loyal to the organization, the organization needs to be fair in its system regarding distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

When employees feel they are treated fairly by the organization in every respect, they are inclined to show positive attitude, and behaviours like continual commitment and job satisfaction (Colquitt, Greenberg: 2005). Every employee wants justice in the working environment in terms of fair procedures used to determine rewards, distribution of rewards, and interaction with supervisions to make them more satisfied and committed with their work and organization.

When employees are treated fairly well, they feel need of reciprocal response to the organization in positive ways. This need for reciprocity underscores the level of commitment in them. Fairness perceptions hold an important place in the decisions and processes of pay, benefits, and other compensation facets. In fact, fairness in compensation received, decisions regarding the compensation – related process and the way this information is communicated to all employees hold an integral role in employee commitment. Greenberg (1990) asserts that the ideals of justice are the basic requirement for the effective functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction and commitment of the workers.

Organizational justice mainly concentrates in the workplace fairness which influences numerous organizational and individual work related factors like turnover intentions, absenteeism, job satisfaction, role breadth, job performance, trust, leadership and employee commitment. Folger and Konovsky (1989) found positive association among the dimensions of organizational justice with employee commitment. The studies of Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) noted that justice dimensions have positive and significant impact on employee commitment. Lambert (2003) observed positive relationship of procedural and distributive justice on satisfactions of Midwestern prisons. In the educational context, Zaman, Ali and Ali (2010) conducted a research on the dimensions of organizational justice, job satisfaction and employee commitment and found that justice dimensions' foster job satisfaction and commitment of the employees. In another study, Bakhshi, Kumar and Rani (2009) reported the positive and significant association of distributive justice and procedural justice with employee commitment and job satisfaction of medical college employees in India.

Consistent with above findings, Najafi (2011) concluded that educational experts of different universities reported higher employee commitment with the provision of organizational justice. Fatt et al (2010) reported that the higher level of employees' perception towards procedural justice and distributive justice tended to increase the level of job satisfaction and employee commitment.

9. Framework for Employee Commitment Using Organizational Culture and Organizational Justice Variables

9.1. Leadership

The leadership of the organization provides the fulcrum in which other issues of the organization revolve. The identification of the cultural variables, the inculcation of the variables into the organizational scheme of operations and the continuous reinforcement of cultural variables remain within the leadership of the organization. More so, the leadership style of the manager will to a large extent determine the application and implementation of the accepted cultural variables. Okpara (2005) identified participatory leadership style as most valuable style that can mobilize every member of staff to the ideals of the organization. Participatory leadership style in this perspective provides opportunity for every employee to evaluate the cultural variables existing and make reasonable contributions that can impact positively on the organization. The isolation of salient variables and its proper integration into the mainstream of the organizational culture help to foster and develop employees that are committed to the goals, vision and aspiration of the organization. The evaluation of fair treatment of the employees depends on the determination of the leadership to be fair. Perception of this fairness anchors employees to commitment.

9.2. Organizational Systems and Procedures

The organizational system and procedure encapsulate both the work template and the organizational structure of the organization. A job design that explores the cultural components of the organization prompts proper identification and expansion of the organizational culture. With these cultural variables intact and nurtured, the organization grows and adapts to realistic disposition. Formidable operational system also provides opportunities for tentacles of fairness. A job design that isolates the individual differences of the employees and their capabilities ensure modest achievement. A good job design makes employees to be placed in the departments that match their skills. This invariably extracts commitment from the employees and perception of fairness because their capabilities were considered in their placement. It provides information about qualification for doing the job and the needs of the organization so that there will be balance.

9.3. Human Resources Policies

Human resources department of any organization is the bedrock of the organization. The administrative, personnel functions, employee relations and resource planning which are vital ingredients of an organization thrive within a culture. Human resources policies should provide mechanism that identify and sustain vital cultural variables of the organization. The identification of these norms, values, legends and ceremonials and the propagation to be in line with the vision and goal of the organization remain the hallmark of human resources department. Behaviours that sustain needed cultures are encouraged so that the cultural variables of commitment are maintained. Human resources policies outline organizational values, norms and legends that help to galvanize the workforce for productivity.

10. Conclusion

The importance of organizational culture and its propagation for the growth and development of the organization remains the beacon for any management that wants to succeed. Developing appropriate measures to address culture issues in organizations in terms of increasing organizational capability and performance have been examined. Every organization must give attention to issues

concerning culture like the development of norms, values, legends, myth and ceremonials. The human resources department of every organization should develop structures that sustain cultural transmission. Employee commitment excels within the confines of formidable organizational culture. Leadership plays significant role in managing culture through developing and sustaining organizational performance and commitment. Literature reviewed supported tremendously the role culture plays in ensuring employee commitment through culture awareness activities and showcasing of both visible and invisible components of organizational culture.

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