



SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN NIGERIAN MANUFACTURING FIRMS: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the interaction between social integration as an emergent concept of quality of work life and employee commitment in Nigeria. Adopting a literary review approach. Data gathered from 320 respondents interviewed indicates that social integration is a strong predictor of employee commitment such as affective, continuance and normative commitment. Hence, we recommend that manufacturing firms should adopt policies that will orient their employees and integrate them to the culture of the organisation so as to prevent work alienation, and that structures should be designed in a manner that give employees right and access to positions and status in core institution of the organisation, as this will increase the commitment level of the employees.*

KEYWORDS: Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Social Integration, Employee Commitment

INTRODUCTION

The workplace is changing dramatically and demands for quality products and services are increasing. To remain competitive in the face of these pressures, employee commitment is crucial. The benefits of having the best trained workers using the most advanced technology can be nullified by employees who do not want to use their energy and skills for the benefit of the organisation. However, most managers lack the understanding, or ignore the fact that employees are social beings, belonging to a particular social system, family life style and culture. To improve commitment rate organizations, need to consider the social welfare of their employees when designing polices and work processes, understanding that, without the personal efforts and commitment of the employees, organizations cannot succeed (Muindi, 2015). Again, without employee commitment, there can be no improvement in any area of business activity given that employees are the stimulating energy behind every successful organization. Van Dyne and Graham (2004) contend that various personal, situational and positional factors can affect the commitment of employees and consequently their attitudes and behaviour. Also, the trend with most manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt and Nigeria at large is the lack of value for committed employees as they are willing to sacrifice workers to maintain their financial bottom line. Employees point to decades of downsizing, rightsizing and re-engineering as evidence that entrepreneurs of manufacturing sector treat them as expendable commodities when times get tough (Bragg, 2002). While manufacturing firms still want their employees to be productive and committed, to be proud of their organisations and to remain with them for a reasonable period of time, they need to acknowledge that employees also have needs both as workers and individuals, unfortunately however, practices



by most manufacturing firms have not kept pace with the changing needs of employees and this resulted in high turnover, lack of commitment and poor-spirited workforce.

Again, Almarshad, (2015) noted that employees of the manufacturing sub-sector have shown high rate of low morale, poor motivation, job dissatisfaction, lack of loyalty resulting from manufacturing firm's inability to develop strategies that enable them to become engaged and deeply involved in the running of the organization. Managers of this firms in their bid to maximize profit have neglected the importance of effective management practices in enhancing performance, and ensuring the attainment of competitive advantage. As observed by Onugu (2005) the lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor management practices, shortages of skilled personnel, and high enterprise mortality have been one of the worst challenges facing manufacturing firms in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that we undertake this study in order to examine the causal relationship between social integration and employee commitment of manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE

Social Integration

Social integration is an important phenomenon in Quality of work life that is concerned with making an organisation more equitable. In other words, social integration can be explained as the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all employees to participate in social, economic and political life of an organisation on the basis of equality of rights and opportunity, equity and dignity (Ferguson 2008). A socially integrated organisation strongly believes that all employees belong to the organisation and have the right and power to influence it.

Again, social integration refers to the extent to which employees experience cooperative social interaction with their group members, satisfaction with other group members, and attraction to the group (Wang and Kim, 2013). Social integration which is also described as employees' developing a social sense of the organizational environment and to be liked and accepted by peers is considered as one of the most critical indicators of newcomers' adjustment (Morrison, 1993; Bauer and Gren; 1998). As a result of access to people and network, social integration gives a sense of control, makes the organizational environment predictable, and thereby allows employees have social-capital resources whenever they need information and support (Ashford and Black, 2006). By actively seeking information and feedback and knowing what others expect them to do, newcomers understand more clearly the difference between being and not being a member of the organization and thereby increase their perceived insider status (Masterson and Stamper, 2003). Furthermore, proactively building relationships enable newcomer to interact frequently with their co-workers and help them acquire interpersonal skills needed for cooperation (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). The close interaction with group members enables new comers form a positive impression in organizational environment. (Wang and Kim, 2013). Theorists posit that integration into a social group involves the establishment of a situational identity and that those who successfully establish an identity through social interactions more strongly identify with the organization as a whole, which in turn, enhances their commitment (Reichers, 1987; Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003, Mengüç et al., 2007). Taking into



account the reviewed literature, we propose that social integration predicts employees' commitment to the organization. More so, whether the employee achieves personal identity and self-esteem is influenced by such attributes in the climate of his workplace as these: freedom from prejudice, a sense of community, interpersonal openness, and the absence of stratification in the organization and the existence of upward mobility, openness, and the absence of stratification in the organization. Employees that experiences social integration are more likely to accept their responsibilities as members of an organization and as members of a social network at work. The motivation of responsibility and support from organizational environment increase employees' commitment to the organization.

According to Bosswick and Heckman (2006), social integration is the inclusion and acceptance of employees into the core institutions, relationships, and position of stakeholders. Bosswick and Heckman argued that there are four dimensions of social integration: structural, cultural, interactive, and identificational, that they are connected to each other and that together they form the conditions for successful social integration into the organisation.

Structural integration means that employees have rights and access to position and status in the core institutions of their employers, such as, the housing system, welfare system, and organisational citizenship. Participation in these core institutions determines an employee's socio-economic status and the resources and opportunities available to him or her. It is, however, not possible to participate in the core organisational processes without first attaining cultural competencies.

Cultural integration indicates that employees can only claim rights and assume position in the organisation they work for, if they obtain communicative competencies and knowledge about the dominant organisational culture. Even though cultural integration mainly concerns employees, it is a two-way process of adaptation in which the organisation also has a responsibility to learn new ways to relate to employees and their needs. Policies that facilitate this kind of cultural integration include training and support for employees' cultural activities, which can also help them feel more at home.

Interactive integration refers to the acceptance and inclusion of employees in the relationships and social networks of the organisation. The preconditions for interactive integration are the core elements of cultural integration, as well as the ability to learn and apply the culture of the organisation. The fourth and last dimension, identificational integration, means that an employee has a feeling of belonging to, and identification with, groups in the organisation. These feelings of belonging may often develop later in the integration process as a consequence of participation and acceptance (Bosswick and Heckman 2006).

Furthermore, Wolfersberger and Thomas (2013), pointed out that social integration requires that interactions be normative, defined as not perceived or experienced as odd, peculiar, outlandish, or deserving of unusual attention and within the range of the expectable or consistent with an aspired norm. Also, Taylor, Racino, Knoll, and Lutfiyya (2007) corroborated the view that social integration implies that employees should have the opportunity to interact with other colleagues within and outside the organisation in order to form close relationships, and to achieve full participation in community life.



Employee Commitment

Employee Commitment is generating human energy and activating the human mind (Jaw and Liu, 2004). Meyer and Allen, (2001), defined commitment as a stabilizing force that acts to maintain behavioural direction when expectancy/equity conditions are not met and do not function. Commitment is an obliging force which requires that the person honour the commitment even in the face of fluctuating attitudes and whims (Brown, 1996). The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Mowday, 2009). It is the psychological bond of an employee to an organization, the strength of which depends on the degree of employee involvement, employee loyalty and belief in the values of the organization. It consists of three factors (Meyer and Allen, 2008). Employee commitment according to (Jaw and Liu, 2004) is not only a human relation concept but involves generating human energy and activating the human mind. Without commitment, the implementation of new ideas and initiatives will be compromised. (John and Elyse, 2010) Commitment has also been defined as a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization (John, Meyer and Elyse, 2010). This binding force can be experienced in different ways that can be accompanied by different mind-sets including: an affective attachment and involvement with the target, a felt obligation to the target, and an awareness of the costs associated with discontinuing involvement with the target (Boxall and Macky, 2009).

Other authors stated that while studying employee commitment there is need to recognise the complexity with which researchers have attempted to construct and view commitment as multi-faceted (Boxall and Macky, 2009). Moreover, employee commitment evolves as a strategic fit that links individuals, job, skills, knowledge, information flow, compensation and the configuration of the organization together to make the organization become more effective. Thus, employers that practice involvement and empowerment of employees will in turn have amplified the number of committed employees within its organization, this is further quite beneficial as it has been acknowledged to boost both individual and organizational outcomes and makes organization more competitive than its rivals.

Again, Dixit and Bhati (2012), had argued that no organization can be successful except its employees are devoted to the actualization of organizational goals. However, Osibanjo, Abiodun and Fadugba (2012), advanced that the extent to which employees are fulfilled in carrying out their various tasks may vary as a result of job environment, work schedules and reward systems. This may lead to various levels of satisfaction and commitment, where commitment is shaky, it leads to low productive and lack of motivation, whereas, if commitment is high then productivity and motivation levels are always high. In lieu of this, it could easily be acceptable to note that commitment is highly as a result of job satisfaction level, which implies that individuals are spurred to deliver value when they are satisfied with what they do. Commitment is most often defined as an association of employees to the organization as a result of involvement in its process (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Rowden (2000) described commitment as believing and accepting the objectives and values inherent in an organization and having the desires to continue to be a part of the organization. Robinson and Coulter (2003) argued that committed employees show strong desire to continue contributing to the growth and success of the organization, thereby developing a diminished propensity for turnover.



Researchers such as (Conway, Edel, Kathy and Monks, 2010), and (Owoyemi, Oyelere, Elegbede, and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011), propose one such conceptualization of commitment comprising three separate components these are, 1) Affective Commitment, 2) Continuance Commitment and 3) Normative Commitment. The researchers gave a brief description of the three, each of which reflects a unique underlying psychological state.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. In traditional, ongoing employment relationships, a high level of affective commitment has been found to be related to low employee turnover, low absenteeism and improved job performance hence employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so (Wang, 2010). Several studies, describe the term commitment as an affective orientation of the employees toward the organization. Employees with affective commitment continue service with organization because they want to do so.

Kanter (2012) describe cohesion commitment as the attachment of an individual's affectivity and emotion to the group. Affective commitment to the goal and values and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth as argued by Buchanan (2013). Mowday et al. (2016) describe affective approach as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Therefore, an individual who is affectively committed or emotionally attached to the organization believe in the goal and values of the organization, works hard for the organization and intend to stay with the organization (Mowday et al., 2016). Meyer and Allen (1996) correlates affective commitment with work experiences where employees experience psychologically comfortable feelings (such as approachable managers), increasing their sense of competence (such as feedback). The development of affective commitment involves recognizing the organization's worth and internalising its principles and standards (Beck and Wilson 2000).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment develops on the basis of earlier experiences influenced by family-based experiences (parents that stress work loyalty) or cultural experiences (sanctions against job-hopping) (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Normative commitment can increase through beliefs that the employees have. The normative aspect develops as individuals' perception of their moral obligation to remain with a specific organization, irrespective of how much status improvement or fulfilment the organization gives the individual over the years (March and Mannari 2007). Thus, normative commitment/obligation is seen as a result of the receipt of benefits (which encourages a feeling that one should reciprocate), and/or acceptance of the terms of a psychological contract. Normative commitment reflects an individual's feeling of obligation to maintain organizational membership because he/she believes it is morally right to be loyal to, and stay in, the organization. Although normative commitment is widely recognized as a salient dimension of employee commitment, it has been found to be substantially inter-related with affective commitment (Coyle-Shapiro, 2008).

Also, Randall and Cote (2011), also advanced that normative commitment is likely to spring up when employees feel a high sense of obligation to retain their jobs in a firm due to perceived investment such firms has made on them. This is to say, that as organizations make



huge investment both monetary and non-monetary towards developing their workforce that such gesture may elicit the desire for the employees to remain in the organization more than they could have stayed. To a large extent this could be the reason most organizations set aside huge amounts of money as budget yearly geared towards compensation, training and development of staff as a way to boost their well-being.

Continuance Commitment

When employees enter into the organization, they are bound to maintain a link with the organization or committed to remain with the organization because of lack of alternative opportunity or awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. The cost associated with leaving includes attractive benefits; the threat of wasting time, effort spent acquiring, disruption of personal relationship. This was more appropriately defined by Allen & Meyer (1990) he proposed that continuance commitment develops on the basis of two factors: (1) number of investment (side bets) individuals make in their current organization and (2) perceived lack of alternatives. These investments can be anything that the individual considers valuable such as pension plans, organization benefits, status that would be lost by leaving the organization, which makes them stay with their current employers (Meyer & Allen, 1984) Similarly, lack of employment alternatives also increases the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization and therefore increase the continuance commitment of employees to the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Kanter (1968) defined continuance commitment as cognitive – continuance commitment as that which occurs when there is a profit associated with continued participation and a cost associated with leaving". Somers (1993) suggest that continuance commitment can be subdivided into high sacrifice commitment ("personal sacrifice" associated with leaving) and low alternative commitment ("limited opportunities" for other employment).

The approach of continuance commitment develops when an individual recognizes that he or she will lose investments (the money they earn as a result of the time spent in the organization), and/or perceives that there are no alternatives or other course of action. When an individual has awareness or consideration about expenses and threats linked to leaving the organization, this form of commitment is considered to be calculative (Meyer and Allen 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) also specified that individuals whose most important connection with the organization is based on continuance commitment stay with the organization simply because they have no choice. Continuance commitment describes an individual's need to remain with the organization resulting from her/his recognition of the costs such as tenure, pay, benefits, vesting of pensions and family commitment associated with leaving the organization. It may also refer to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so (Loi and Foley, 2008).

Social Integration and Employee Commitment

Estivaleta et al. (2016) verified the influence of social integration and employee's affective commitment at work, from the perspective of the employees of a railway logistics company in Rio Grande do Sul. The survey involved 247 employees of a private company. The findings show that, in terms of affective commitment, the highest averages were attributed to the fulfilment, relation with superior and relation with colleague's factors, assuming that the



employees feel fulfilled in their work, as well as perceive quality in the management, related to trainings received in order to promote professional improvement.

(Hurter, 2008) argues that greater levels of employee commitment lead to organisational benefits such as a continuous flow of improvements, cost and efficiency improvements and active employee participation. Committed employees are believed to enhance an organisation as they feel secure in their jobs, are well trained, feel part of a team and are proud thus enjoying doing their jobs (HseinHo, 2009).

Steers (2011), also stated that social integration was also found to be positively related to employee commitment, thus the research scan collates empirical evidence about the characteristics of highly dependable organizations such as a strong work ethic, highly reliable and how these organizations develop within and outside hence influencing employee commitment.

Organizations consist of people. How well the organization works depends on how these people integrate, they are working together generally along either hierarchical or process lines (McDonald, 2011). How well people work together is a crucial factor in the success of any organization or group. Employers have traditionally seen employees as collections of individuals held together through self-interest, rules, exercise of authority (McDonald, 2011). In today's world, there are many firms that support social integration in the form of quality circles, self-managing teams, liaisons. When observing any group of people who work together, one can notice many social processes going on such as communicating, influencing each other, cooperating with one another and competing (Hausknecht, 2012). Social integration and process in an organization brings availability of opportunities to play and how challenges and issues are tackled.

Researchers view social integration in an organization as communication, influence and prosocial behaviour. How well these integrations effectively play in the organization is highly responsible for the level of commitment among the employees (Conway, Edel, Kathy and Monks, 2010). High levels of commitment are experienced in organizations where communication channels are open and transparency is highly encouraged, positive competition is observed (Gantasala, 2011). For social integration to be viewed effectively in an organization setting, the organization must have a procedure that emphasizes work through top down social interactions structured around the organization chart, or hierarchy which work end to end structured around their business processes which enfold into complete integration (Mark and McDonald, 2011).

Through working and connecting with each other, employees do more than just what they are told top-down and more than what is defined as their job. When integrated individuals or groups influence the behaviour of each other, it is called social integration employees in action with one another means integration of some kind. These integrations bring about new attitudes of being involved and thus the process becomes social. Most organizations are concerned with positive integration and interactions because these create an environment which promotes employee commitment (Nguyen John and Nguyen, 2014).

A well implemented social integration creates a normative bond among employees and injects in them the obligation to return, any benefits received by them. Whereas investments accrue as employees make contributions that will be rewarded in the future, reciprocity would



work in the opposite way: an individual would receive a benefit, such as training or an opportunity beyond his or her current ability, and would expect to repay it through future commitment (Bin,Ahmed, Shafi, and Shaheen, 2011).Research has shown that organizational investment in employee results in higher levels of employee affective commitment, as well as higher levels of employee citizenship behaviour (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Also, empirical studies have shown that employee commitment are functions of several variables such as satisfaction, organizational support, financial reward, communication promotion prospect and how well employees are fully integrated into organisations system (Brown, McHardy, McNabb and Taylor, 2011).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper examined social integration as emerging concept in the work context with a special focus on manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria. Based on findings and theoretical discovery, we concluded that social integration contributes to employee commitment. As our findings indicate, social integration contributes to better affective commitment, trust in the quality of management and synergize the employees in the manufacturing firms surveyed. Also, we observed that in manufacturing firms where employees are socially integrated into the system, information sharing is enhanced and employees tend to exhibit more continuance commitment that in turn engenders organisational development. Hence, we recommend that manufacturing should adopt policies that will orient their employees and integrate them to the culture of the organisations so as to prevent work alienation. Also, that supervisors and head of departments should encourage and or promote altruistic behaviour within their units and that organisational structures should be designed in a manner that give employees right and access to positions and status in core institution of the organisation, as this will increase the commitment level of the employees.

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