

EFFECT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN YOBE STATE UNIVERSITY DAMATURU, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Today's organizations are facing the challenges of competing with each other due to globalization. Competitiveness of an organization depends on how the organization gain competitive advantage over others, and how its leaders influence their subordinates and ensure that they have a workforce with higher level of organizational commitment, which will ultimately lead to the success of organizations especially in education sector (higher educational institutions), hence, it is considered as backbone of development of any nation. This study examined the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' organizational commitment among academic staff of public universities in (YSU) Nigeria. The quantitative research design was used in this study, where a survey questionnaire was distributed among academic staff. The total of 196 samples was used for the analysis. In order to analyze the data, two statistical software were used namely SPSS version 25.0 and Smart PLS version 3.2.8. The results indicated that ethical leadership had positively and significantly influenced organizational commitment. Implication of this study is the contribution of ethical leadership to organizational commitment in HEIs. Ethical leadership should therefore be applied and practiced by school leaders to improve the success of organizational commitment and consequently improve the performance of HEIs in Nigeria.

Keywords: work ethics, ethical leadership, higher educational institution, organizational commitment, academic staff

1.0 Introduction

Without the commitment of teachers, quality education is impossible and the high level of organizational commitment requires strong leadership, particularly in a developing countries (Mahmood, 2015). According to Buluc (2009), a leaders' major role in increasing employee commitment is to be accountable (Buluç, 2009). An academic administrator, therefore, has an important role to play in making teachers feel that they are part of the organization to work more efficiently (Oğuz, 2010). Ethical leadership is a clarion call due to the contemporary credit crisis, the worst recession in the world since the 1930s; and the different scandals in erstwhile prominent corporate organizations. However, HEIs also could not be an exception.

Every educational institution needs an effective leadership with strong soft skills to move teachers into the front line as an effort to achieve excellence in education, and to achieve success in organizational commitment. It is, therefore, an obligation of each school administrator to take responsibility to improve performance, implement continuous improvement while effectively managing the school, especially in the facet of teachers' commitment to meeting a sustainable development.

In higher education institutions, the correlation between leadership styles and organizational commitment needs to be examined in order to enhance the efficiency of the school. The responsibility for achieving the objective of quality education rests with academic administrators who serve as leaders like any organization's directors who take administrative actions to fulfil evolving everyday climate. Higher education administrators need committed employees to assist them to attain their objectives efficiently. The degree of organizational commitment of the professors is influenced by the leadership style practiced by the academic administrators (Saeed, Gelaidan, & Ahmad, 2013).

Khasawneh, et al., (2016) in their study of ethical leadership practices among academic staff of public university in Jordan, suggested that further studies be conducted on relationship of ethical leadership with employees' outcomes such as organizational performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, and workplace deviance.

Past studies have shown that perceived higher work ethics will increase organizational commitment while lower work ethics will reduce organizational commitment (Wright, Hassan, & Yukl, 2014). Ethical leadership can increase organizational commitment

and reduce unethical behaviours of subordinates to assist in the growth and development of both the organization and employees (Hassan & Wright 2014).

In the same vein Ilham Ismail and Yaakob Daud, (2014) acknowledged that ethical leadership influences the school engagement of the organization. The implication of this study is the contribution of ethical leadership to organizational commitment in schools, (Ismail & Yaakob, 2014). Chinwe et al. (2017) investigated the impact of Ethical Leadership on the commitment of employees in Nigeria: A study by Innoson Limited Enugu, Nigeria, Technical and Industrial Company. The study found out that, there is significant impact of ethical leadership elements towards organizational commitment.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the influence of ethical leadership towards organizational commitment among the academic staff of Yobe State University.

2.0 Literature Review

There is no general consensus on the definition of organizational commitment in the literature (Rusu, 2013). Organizational commitment has generally been defined as the attitude of leading an employee to feel connected with the organization (Eleswed & Fatema, 2013). However, according to Selamat, *et al.*, (2013). Organizational commitment influences the relationship between a staff member and an organization and whether an employee stays with the organization. Furthermore, organizational commitment “strongly influences work and service quality and plays a significant role in organizational development” (Farooq & Zia, 2013). Thus, individuals committed with the organization are more inclined to make additional efforts to achieve organizational goals that may include creativity in the work process.

According to Mowday, Steers, & Porter, (1979). Organizational commitment is defined as a strong belief against accepting the organization’s goals and values, willingness to exert energy and effort on the organization’s behalf, and a definite desire to remain a member of the organization (Ismail & Yaakob, 2014). Again Mowday et al. (1982) define this very same concept as a firm belief appears in a level of acceptance of the planned goal and values, readiness to make substantial efforts for organizational growth and to maintain a strong membership within the organization's internal society.

Meyer and Allen have constructed and formulated structures of organizational commitment that include the affective dimension, continuous dimension, and normative dimensions. These three dimensions are described more accurately as components or dimensions of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ismail & Yaakob, 2014).

According to Allen and Meyer (1990). There are three dimensions of organizational commitment, that is, Affective commitment which refers to the emotional attachment of employees to the organization, identification with it and involvement with it. Continuous commitment denotes an undertaking based on the costs associated with leaving the organization by the employees, therefore, that promises them to remain in the organization. and Normative commitment relates to the sense of obligation of employees to stay with the organization. The assumption that a self - sufficient employee creates an ethical duty in the form of normative commitment

The concept of ethical leadership is moderately new, however significant measure of research on the thought is developing (Bedi, Alpaslan, & Green, 2016; Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, & Prussia, 2013) however, this is equally important because, the period of the 21st century has seen economic downturns by numerous worldwide associations because of unethical practices (Khasawneh, Jawarneh, Abu-Alruzz, & Abdelghafour, 2016). It is especially in the midst of corporate scandals and moral slips that the broader public and interest groups in a company make the essential inquiry, in particular, who are corporate directors and are they moral. The concern for “ethical awareness” comes when the notion of leadership legitimacy is challenged and the public confidence in corporate governance is incredibly low (Katarina Katja Mihalie, Bogdan Lipicnik, 2010). Yasir and Mohamad (2016) also stressed that Principally, response to numerous corporate scandals fascinated scholars responsiveness to the topic (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016).

The philosophies, values, and beliefs of ethics and morality characterize the basis of organizational behaviour and thus formulate the footprint on which the leaders influence staff members in attaining the organization's goals. Bubble (2012), defines ethical leadership as a process of trying to influence employees by values, guiding principles and beliefs that are broadly bordering on accepted standards of organizational behaviour (Alshammari, Almutairi, & Thuwaini, 2015). But according to Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, (2005) ethical leadership is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making” (Brown et al., 2005).

Kalshoven et al. (2011) formed a multi-dimensional workplace ethical leadership (ELW) questionnaire that included seven various aspects of ethical leadership behaviour, including fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, a people orientation, power-sharing, clarification of roles and sustainability concerns, as clearly explained below:

Fairness refers to impartiality, treating others in a right and equitable manner, and making principled and fair choices. Fairness has become an essential form of ethical leadership behaviour since these leaders are selfless and have integrity, trustworthiness, and

honesty, and reliability, they are equally responsible for their actions (Treviño et al., 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2005; De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008). The second is power-sharing, which is described it as allowing followers to contribute in decision making and listening to their ideas and concerns. Moreover, power-sharing allows more control and less dependence on leaders for employees (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Brown et al. (2005) considered power-sharing as giving followers a chance to have a say by ethical leaders. The third dimension is role clarification asserts that responsibilities, expectations and performance objectives to be clarified. It allows employees to realize their expectations and to show if their performance is equitable. In addition, De Hoogh and Den Hartog, (2008) and Kalshoven *et al.*, (2011) stressed that it helps employees not to worry unnecessarily about unclear expectations and how employees can contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives meaningfully and effectively.

The fourth is people-orientation which contributes to genuine concern, respect, and support for employees, but also ensures that wherever possible their legitimate needs are met. In their respective studies, Treviño et al. (2003) & Resick et al. (2006) indicate that care for, respect and followers support has been frequently mentioned and emphasized by the people-orientation dimension of ethical leadership. The fifth is integrity which denotes the consistency of words and deeds and the ability to keep promises. Behavioural integrity can be referred to as the alignment of words with actions, implying that what you say is consistent with what you do (Lemoine, Hartnell, & Leroy, 2018). The sixth is ethical guidance which helps to communicate on ethics and explain ethical rules, promote and reward ethical behaviour. Ethical leaders communicate ethical standards (Mo, Ling, & Xie, 2019; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003) However, this ethical guidance involves communicating ethics, clarifying ethical rules, promoting and rewarding employee ethical behaviour (Kalshoven et al., 2011). The last dimension is concern for sustainability this is related to leaders' attitudes towards environmental care and encouraging recycling. This includes the attention of leaders to sustainability issues, bearing in mind the results of their actions beyond the parameters of their own workgroup, and showing concern for society's welfare (Kalshoven *et al.*, 2011; López-González, Martínez-Ferrero, & García-Meca, 2019). Therefore, this study will test the following hypothesis regarding the influence of ethical leadership on organizational commitment.

H1. Ethical leadership will positively influence organizational commitment YSU Damaturu.

3.0 Methodology

To serve the objectives of this research study, the researcher has chosen a quantitative method which is presumed to be suitable to conduct this study and furthermore, it was surveyed at a particular period of time. On top of it, many kinds of research undertaken for academic programs are time constraint so cross-sectional studies with a survey method are more preferred approaches (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the quantitative method is the most common data analysis method, in which questionnaires are employed to collect quantitative data as directed in structural design (Bechor *et al.*, 2010).

The population for this study were all academic staff of Yobe State University. Creswell (2005) stated, "a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic". this study was carried out using proportionate stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is defined as a form of sampling method by which the researcher divides the population into distinct sets called strata. Then a probability sample (often simple random sample) is drawn from every group (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). A sample of 196 academic staff were used in the study.

A survey questionnaire was used as the primary source of data in this study. The study questionnaire was adopted by established field scholars. The scale of ethical leadership measurement Kalshoven et al. (2011) developed a scale that was used. While scale developed by Allen and Mayer (1997) was used for organizational commitment.

In order to achieve the result through the data analysis process two types of statistics, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistical analysis were conducted. SPSS version 25.0 and Smart PLS version 3.2.8 were used to produce the result.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Details of all those analyses that are used to evaluate the structural model of the present study are discussed in the following subsections. As discussed previously in chapter three (3), the validity of the structural model is assessed by decision coefficient of determination (R^2), t – values/significance of path coefficients (P-values) and path coefficients (β). A satisfactory evaluation of the PLS structural model must comprise of three (3) basic indices namely path coefficients, multiple regression squared correlations (R^2) and t -value

The values of 0.00, 0.15, 0.35, and 0.50 reflect a non-existent, weak, moderate and strong influence effect (Henseler, Fassott, Dijkstra, & Wilson, 2012). When performing the bootstrapping, the t -values are computed, where the value must be greater than 1.96 (Chin, 1998). The findings of the structural model analysis are shown below (see Figure 4.1). Smart-PLS application version 3.2.8 used in order to achieve the analysis criteria of measurement model evaluation based on the analysis protocol of partial least squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

To investigate the relationship between hypothetical constructs, the structural model has to be analysed since the study implied partial least square (PLS) as the methodology of structural equation modelling to assess the survey items. In order to evaluate the

structural model, Hair et al. (2017) suggested looking at the R^2 , beta (β) and the correspondent t-values through bootstrapping technique with a resamples of 5000.

Table 1 Results of Hypotheses Testing

H	Relationship	Beta (β)	R^2	T-Statistics	P-Value	Decision	2.50%	97.5%
H ₁	EL -> OC	-42.845	0.421	3.996	0.000	Supported	-60.353	-16.63

Table 4.10 shows that there was significant influence between the constructs through path analysis at significant level 0.00 with a two-tailed test, $p < 0.05$ and $T > 1.96$ (Imam & Hengky, 2015). The results of the coefficient of the assessment showed that ethical leadership (EL) has significantly influenced organizational commitment (OC) ($R^2 = 0.421$, $t = 3.996$, $p < 0.05$). The findings indicated that ethical leadership led to 42.1% change toward organizational commitment among academic staff of YSU. Hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The objective of the study is to analyse the influences of ethical leadership toward organizational commitment. The data has been analysed in order to analyse the influences of ethical leadership toward organizational commitment. Based on the findings of the objective of the study, R – Square (R^2) coefficient of determinant obtained is 0.421. The findings indicated that ethical leadership led to 42.1% change toward organizational commitment among academic staff of YSU. Based on coefficients analysis, ethical leadership is significantly influencing the organizational commitment, where $T = 3.996$ and significance value $0.000 < 0.05$.

Coefficients of determinants (R^2) reflects the cumulative effects of exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variable. The R^2 values should be high enough for the model to achieve minimum level of explanatory power (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Falk & Miller, (1992) recommend that, R^2 values should be equal to or greater than 0.10 in order for the variance explained of a particular endogenous construct to be adequate. However, Cohen, (1988) suggest that R^2 0.2 is considered weak, 0.13 as moderate, and 0.26 as substantial. Therefore, based on Cohen, (1988) we can conclude that the relationship is substantial.

Therefore, there is a positive and significant relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment of employees in this study, based on perceptions of the academic staff of a public university in Nigeria. Hence, ethical leadership influences the organizational commitment of university academic staff. This implies that when a leader in public university practices ethical leadership, employees reciprocate in the same way by engaging in organizational commitment. This result is consistent with previous studies which found that the more ethical the leader, the higher the level of organizational commitment of employees (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

The positive significant relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment is supported by Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers, (2016), which shows that when employees perceived their leader as fair, they become emotionally and cognitively attached to the organization, and in turn devote more time and energy to the organization by practising discretionary behaviours like organizational commitment. The same findings were also shown in by Zeinabadia, (2010), who conducted a study among teachers in Iran, and found out that leader's fair treatment encourages extra-role behaviour among employees.

Likewise, Khan (2017) in his study of the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour among academic staff of a public university in Pakistan, found a significant relationship between ethical leadership and both dimensions towards organizational citizenship behaviour. The study found out that when employees of public universities are led by leaders having ethical characteristics, they exhibit discretionary behaviour through reciprocal exchange.

In this study, the seven dimensions of ethical leadership namely fairness, power-sharing, people-orientation, integrity, ethical guidance, role clarification, and concern for sustainability were found to have a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment.

Fairness in this study has a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment. This result is supported by Colquitt et al., (2001), which indicated that fair procedures of a leader stimulate employees extra-role behaviours like organizational commitment. Likewise, Iqbal et al. (2012) also are of the same view in their study of higher education institution showing leader's fairness influences employees in such a way that they readily perform beyond their job description, resulting in the existence of organizational commitment. Moreover, Simons & Roberson, (2003), stated that employees exhibit organizational commitment when they see their leader as a fair person who has concern for them. They further stated that employees who observe that the procedures in the organization are fair they tend to be more committed to their jobs.

Furthermore, the positive relationship of ethical guidance and role clarification with employees' organizational commitment are in line with the studies by Brown et al (2005) and Kalshoven (2011), who in their respective studies concluded that leaders guide employees regarding ethical standards and appropriate behaviours, as a result of which employees are engaged in organizational commitment.

Similarly, the positive and significant relationship between people-orientation and organizational commitment have been backed by a study of Cropanzano & Mitchell, (2005), which indicated that characteristics of a leader such as people orientation enhance a strong social relationship between the leader and employees, resulting in employees engaging in organizational commitment. They also showed that employees reciprocate the leader's positive and caring treatment by imitating it. They also showed that employees are likely to behave cooperatively by engaging in extra-role behaviours when leaders show support towards them.

Power-sharing in this research also has a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment. This is in line with the findings of Kalshoven et al. (2011), which shows that leaders having characteristics like power-sharing, results in employees experiencing more control, responsibility, and involvement in work. Thus, willingly engaging in organizational commitment.

Concern for sustainability has been positively and significantly related to organizational commitment in this study. This is supported by Ferdig, (2007), who argues that when leaders become aware of their efforts on the surroundings, they become role models of environmentally responsible behaviour, resulting in stimulating behaviours of employees such as organizational commitment.

Moreover, the findings of this study showed ethical leadership had positively and significantly influenced employees' organizational commitment in the studied university. The findings show that there is a positive and significant relationship between both integrity and ethical guidance towards organizational commitment is moderately higher, which implies that the chances of employees exhibiting extra-role behaviours are enhanced by the ability of the leader to keep their words and actions consistent and able to communicate ethical code and conducts. However, this study, shows that such characteristics of a leader as power-sharing and concern for sustainability have a moderately low positive significant correlation in this study. This implies that leaders in YSU need to improve in their characteristics of power-sharing and concern for sustainability based on perceptions of academic staff. Hence, this will further encourage the academic staff to exhibit organizational commitment

5.0 Conclusion

It can be inferred from the above analysis that ethical leadership had a significant influence on organizational commitment among academic staff at a public university in Nigeria. This implies that when a leader of a public university is ethical in terms of being fair, clarifies roles and responsibilities, oriented towards employees, has a concern for the sustainability of the environment, delegates duties, provide ethical guidance and has consistency in words and actions, based on norm of reciprocity, academic staff would willingly engage in extra-role behaviours' such as organizational commitment, thus, complementing the positive feedback loop. The result of the study shows that ethical leadership is practised in public universities.

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