

## **BOUNDED ETHICALITY AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between bounded ethicality and employee commitment. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design to solicit responses from employees of four telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. 112 respondents participated in the study. Descriptive statistics, spearman's rank correlation and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis and test for hypothesis. Findings reveal that there is a positive significant relationship between bounded ethicality and employee's commitment and the dimensions and measures also correlate this relationship. We concluded that bounded ethicality though a style that allows an organic approach to managing, the employee has concern for the cost associated with remaining with organization on a long- term basis especially when viewed with other available alternatives. And recommended, that employees should be given responsibility that allow them grow. Therefore management should create a platform that enables them invest in the company's financial sense of belongingness that will in turn attract commitment.*

**Keywords:** *Bounded Ethicality, organizational Structure, Employee's Commitment, Objectivity, Role Clarification, Value Commitment, Alternative Commitment.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The systematic world that makes employee commitment to work towards goal attainment cannot be over emphasized. This study therefore is not based on intentional action that involves the conscious deliberations between right and wrong which are the focus of majority of ethical issues. Rather, it is rooted at improving work place attitude among employees who are themselves a strategic tool that serve as a success factors in an organization.

Most establishments are increasingly getting involved in issues related with ethics. An interesting work environment is assessed as an important factor for organizations and business problems involving ethics (Singhapakdi, 2010). Ethical values may vary from one to another, so there may be necessity for upper management to make certain ethical decision and support employees for ethical behaviors to sustain organizational outcomes (Koh and Boo, 2004). Ethical environment enhances ethical values, clarifies role ambiguities, and provides a clear pathway for ethical decision making in ethical circumstances enabling workers to enjoy their works (khan, 2012). If employees perceive a favorable ethical environment they are also likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction (Koh and Boo, 2004).

Bounded ethicality is seen as the systematic and predictable psychological processes that move people to get involve in ethically questionable behaviors that are inconsistent with their own preferred ethics (Banaji & Bhaskar,2000, Banaji et al,2003; Chugh, Bazerman, & Banaji 2005). People unwittingly get involve in attitude that they would condemn upon further reflection or awareness. This perspective is seen as inducing employee commitment as they undertake their strategic role within the organizations.

According to (Chugh, 2003) was of the view that beginning with well-established knowledge that boundedness and heuristics offer computational rate of delivery, critical to the survival of human beings with less than infinite time for decision making (Bazerman, 2002; Dawes, 1988). This cognitive perspective reflects humans' imperfections as statisticians and scientists (Dunning, 1999).

The link between organizational structure (OS) and employee commitment (EC) has been is widely studied, but mediating role of organizational structure on the relationship between bounded ethicality (BE) and employee commitment is relatively less studied. The present study focuses on mediating role of some facets of organizational structure on the relationship between bounded ethicality and employee commitments. This research study therefore is an attempt to establishing the nature of relationship between bounded ethicality and employee commitment in the Nigeria telecommunication sector. The findings of this study can contribute to understand the relationship between bounded ethicality and employee commitments.

### **1.1 Aim of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between bounded ethicality and employee commitment.

### **1.2 Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses postulated for validation or refutation for the study;

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between objectivity and value commitment.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between objectivity and alternative commitment.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and value commitment.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between role clarification and alternative commitment.

Ho5: Organizational structure does not influence the relationship between bounded ethicality and employees' commitment in the Nigeria telecommunication sector.

## **2. Review of related literature**

### **2.1 Bounded Ethicality**

Bounded ethicality represents that subset of bounded rationality situations in which the self is central and therefore, motivation is most likely to play a prominent role. Chugh *et al* (2005) specifically describe the way bounded ethicality leads individuals to the vulnerability to conflicts of interest through the self as moral, competent and deserving. This is represented by egocentric ethics of the totalitarian ego joined with the unconscious mind. The "self as moral" refers to the idea that people deem themselves to be more honest, trustworthy, ethical, and fair than others (Baumhart, 1968; Tenbrunsel, 1998; Messick & Bazerman, 1996).

Chugh *et al* (2005) argue that positive illusions make individuals susceptible to risk inethical decision-making. They suggest some actions that can have less positive consequences when the positive illusions allow individuals to behave in his/her own self-interest and against

professional and normative demands. Allison, Messick, & Goethals (1989) theorized that it is more difficult for individuals to hold positive illusions if they are inconsistent with easily accessible, objective data. Studies have also shown that self-deserving view that individuals hold. Hastorf & Cantril (1954) found individuals from two football teams to rate their rival teams fairness and sportsmanship as lower than own teams.

Banaji, Bazerman & Chugh (2003) found that individuals have implicit prejudice such that they learn to associate things that usually go together such as gray hair and old age. We mechanically make these associations in order to organize our thoughts and we eventually grow to trust them. This has been shown with the Implicit Association Test (IAT) which studies unconscious bias by showing subjects words very quickly as requiring them to categorize them as good or bad (Greenwald *et al*, 1998). Banaji & Colleagues suggest that ethics training be implemented within organizations to include information about how our minds work and how to reveal unconscious processes that are involved in biased decision making.

### **2.1.1 Objectivity**

Bounded ethicality is judgement based on observable phenomena and uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices. Objectivity has a variety of contested meanings, most of which have been reassessed in the past decades or so. Objectivity can, for example, be ascribed to a person's capacity for impartial or disinterested judgement. Sometimes, objectivity is seen as a quality of methods and rules of inquiry that discipline arbitrary and accidental forces impacting on knowledge. In a more specific and technical sense, measures are objective when they covert strongly with each other and across repeated measurements taken independently by several investigators; such measures reliably indicate a theoretical entity. As a property of knowledge, objectivity refers to propositions that capture some independent and external reality. More so, objectivity can be attributed to social and cultural institutions that are somehow more solid and enduring than individual beliefs.

The bias toward believing that we are more objective than reality dictates leads us to the conclusion that our objectivity will keep conflicts of interests from influencing our commitment. In fact, in 2000, this is exactly the argument that Joseph Berardino, the CEO of Arthur Andersen, made while testifying adore the SEC commission. He argued that the professionalism and objectivity of professional auditors solved the issue of auditor independence. The SEC commissioners appeared to be influenced by this argument, despite its inconsistency with psychological research. The self-as-objective argument carried the day, the SEC failed to act sufficiently, and lack of auditor independence contributed to many corporate failures. Professionals commonly sell their professionalism as immunity against being affected by conflict of interest. We believe that professionalism provides only partial immunity against intentional corruption, and little immunity from the unconscious processes that lead decision makers to succumb to conflicts of interest.

### **2.1.2 Role Clarification**

Ethical leaders work transparently, clarify expectations, and communicate openly so that followers understand what is desired and expected of them, which is labeled role clarification (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Role clarification will contribute to perceptions of employee effectiveness Yukl (2006). individuals could be encouraged to think about how and in which ways they want to develop. Research by Ashford and Cummings (1983) demonstrates that feedback has strong positive effects on the performance of both individuals and groups, specifically through role clarification, improved self-efficacy, the establishment

of behavior reward contingencies and increased self-regulatory control processes (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Similarly, according to Armstrong and Baron (2004), the actual performance could also be compared to the desired performance, therefore the outcome is evaluated and a development plan is set based on the weakness.

## **2.2 Employee Commitment**

Multiple definitions of commitment are found in the literature. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) identified behavioral and attitudinal definitions of commitment. Behavioral commitment, also referred to as attribution commitment in the literature, involves “behaviors that exceed formal and/or normative expectations”. Salancik (1977) proposed that behaviors that are explicit, irrevocable, volitional, and public bind individuals to the behaviors, thus causing greater commitment. In this approach, employees are viewed as becoming committed to a particular cause of action, rather than to a particular entity; commitment is developed retrospectively (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Affective commitment also referred to as psychological or attitudinal commitment in the literature is the basis of many definitions. According to Buchanan (1974), “commitment is viewed as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to ones role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth” Porter et al. (1974) contend that affective commitment can be characterized by three factors:

- (1) Belief in and acceptance of the organizations goals and values,
- (2) A willingness to focus effort on helping the organization achieve its goals, and
- (3) A desire to maintain organizational membership.

It “represents a state in which an individual identifies with a particular organization and its goal and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals” (Mowday et al., 1979). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), affective commitment represents the employees’ emotional attachment to the organization; employees retain membership because they want to do so.

### **2.2.1 Value Commitment**

Value commitment among employees is typically assumed to reduce withdrawal behavior, such as lateness, absenteeism and turnover. Hence there is no doubt that these values appear to have potentially serious consequences for overall organizational performance, Lo (2009) noted that employees with sense of employee commitment are less likely to engage in withdrawal behavior and more willing to accept change.

### **2.2.2 Alternative Commitment**

Alternative commitment represents an affective attachment to the organization. Etzioni (1961) originally described alienative involvement as typical of a prison or military basic training camp in which a coercive compliance system is prevalent. Alienation can be viewed as a basis for organizational commitment if one thinks of an employee’s commitment to the organization as a consequence of a lack of control over the internal organizational environment and; the perceived absence of alternatives for organizational commitment (Etzioni, 1961). Kamfer *et al* (1994:2) claim that alienative commitment may be linked to emotional dissonance, as individuals struggle with internal emotions, which may conflict with the way they are allowed to behave. Particularly in situations where individuals find their behavior extremely constrained. In this case, the role that interpersonal relationships

play, by offering opportunities for social interaction, which according to Abraham (1999:441) negate the negative effects of emotional dissonance, could be linked to the dimension of alternative commitment.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### 3.1 Research design

We adopt the cross-sectional survey method. Cross-sectional research design involves a situation where data is collected at one point in time from a sample selected to represent a larger population. This method is chosen because it allows researchers to carry out studies in natural, real life setting, using the probability samples, thus increasing the external validity of the research and also permits the use of questionnaire for generating data.

#### 3.2 The population for the Study

We therefore identify and utilize the four major telecommunication companies (MTN, Globacom, Airtel, Etisalat) full time employees. In order to have a finite population, we obtained the nominal roll of the employees of the different companies from the human resource units. This being the case, employees that have worked for not less than five years at middle management level was used.

Considering the vast nature of the sector, reaching the target will not be feasible. For the purpose of the study, we identified that portion of the population to which we can have access. This will constitute our accessible population. The population was restricted to only the full staff of selected telecommunication companies (MTN, Globacom, Airtel, Etisalat) in Port-Harcourt. They form the units of analysis for the study and their nature is determined by the survey objective. On the basis of this definition, the elements in the subject matter under review are drawn for the following: thus the population is 157 (see Table 3.1 below).

**Table 3.1: Population of the Study**

| s/no | Department | No. of Staff |
|------|------------|--------------|
| 1    | MTN        | 40           |
| 2    | Globacom   | 45           |
| 3    | Airtel     | 35           |
| 4    | Etisalat   | 37           |
|      | Total      | 157          |

*Source: Survey Data, 2015*

#### 3.3 Sampling and sampling procedure

Participants for this study are sampled based on their clusters in their respective organization with each cluster apportioned a proportionate size for presentation from the total sample size. In determining the total sample size for this study, the Taro Yemen's formula was adopted with the level of precision placed at a 0.05 level.

The Taro Yemen's formula is

$$N = \frac{n}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where            n        =        Sample size  
                         N        =        Population of the study

e                =        Level of significant  
1                =        constant value

Hence, the sample size of this study is given as by

$$n = \frac{157}{1 + 157(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 112$$

The sample size for each organization was determined by using the Bowley's (cited in Nwibere, 2007). Proportionate sample allocation formula given as:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

where  $nh$  = unit of allocation for each firm

$n$  = total sample size

$Nh$  = number of employees in each organization

$N$  = population size

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{157}{1 + 157(0.05)^2} = 112$$

$$1. \text{ MTN } \frac{112 \times 40}{157} = 29$$

$$2. \text{ Globacom } \frac{112 \times 45}{157} = 32$$

$$3. \text{ Airtel } \frac{112 \times 35}{157} = 25$$

$$4. \text{ Etisalat } \frac{112 \times 37}{157} = 26$$

### 3.4 Data collection Method

Data for this study is collected through primary and secondary source. Nachimas and Nachimas (2009) assert that primary data describes raw data usually obtained through the questionnaire, interviews or observation. Denzin (1989) posits that triangulation minimizes the bias that originates for single methodologies, therefore the need for secondary data to reinforce data from primary sources. According to Ghuari *et al* (1995), triangulation is the use of different research methodologies in the investigation of the same phenomenon. It thus allows the researcher to improve the accuracy of judgement and results and enhance validity. As earlier mentioned, the study is primarily relying on questionnaire and personal interviews.

### 3.5 Reliability of the Measuring Instrument

Validity of the survey instruments is achieved through peer vetting assessment by knowledgeable professionals on the subject and supervisors' approval.

According to Parson (2007), reliability refers to the extent to which a measuring instrument is consistent in providing same output when used in another context for generation. The scale to be adopted for this study has previously adjusted reliable. However, we will verify reliability outcomes through confirmatory test of internal consistency on the instrument with our sample using the Cronbach alpha. This calculates the average of all possible Split-Half Reliability Coefficient and the threshold level. 0.7 Which is generally accepted to be the rule of thumb (Nunnally, 1978) will be considered adequate.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Correlation Analysis and Decision Rules

The hypotheses that were earlier stated in the study are analyzed in this section. We have relied on the Spearman Rank ( $\rho$ ) statistic to undertake the analysis.

**Ha1:** Objectivity has a significant relationship with Value Commitment

**Table 1: Correlation Result on the relationship between Objectivity and Value commitment**

|                |                  |  |                     |              |
|----------------|------------------|--|---------------------|--------------|
| Spearman's Rho | Objectivity      | Correlation Coefficient<br>Sig.<br>(2-tailed)<br>N | 1.000<br><br>101    | .435<br>.035 |
|                | Value Commitment | Correlation Coefficient<br>Sig.<br>(2-tailed)<br>N | .435<br>.035<br>101 | 1.000<br>101 |

**\*\* Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

From the results in table 1 above, with  $\rho = .435$  it shows a Positive relationship but not significant at ( $P 0.035 > 0.01$ ) exist between Objectivity and Value commitment. This implies that the hypothesis stated is not accepted which also means that Objectivity does not significantly relate with Value commitment in the Telecommunication sector.

**Ha2:** There is Significant Relationship between Objectivity and Alternative Commitment

**Table 2: Correlation result on the Relationship between objectivity and Alternative Commitment**

|                |                  |  |                        |                |
|----------------|------------------|--|------------------------|----------------|
| Spearman's rho | Objectivity      | Correlation Coefficient<br>Sig.<br>(2-tailed)<br>N | 1.000<br><br>101       | .438**<br>.000 |
|                | Value Commitment | Correlation Coefficient<br>Sig.<br>(2-tailed)<br>N | .438* *<br>.000<br>101 | 1.000<br>101   |

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

From the result, it shows that a positive relationship exist between Objectivity and Alternative Commitment. The  $\rho 0.438$  indicates this relationship and it is also significant at  $P 0.00 < 0.01$ , 2 tailed. This simply means that the hypothesis earlier stated is accepted which means that a significant relationship between Objectivity and Alienative Commitment in the Organization.

**Ha3:** There is Significant Relationship between Role Clarification and value commitment

**Table 3: Correlation Result on the Relationship between Role Clarification and Value Commitment**

| Correlations   |                  |                         |         |        |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------|
| Spearman's Rho | Objectivity      | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000   | .582** |
|                |                  | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000    | .000   |
|                |                  | N                       | 101     | 101    |
|                | Value Commitment | Correlation Coefficient | .582* * | 1.000  |
|                |                  | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000    | .000   |
|                |                  | N                       | 101     | 101    |

\*\* Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results of the analysis are as shown in the table 3, from the results with  $r = 0.582$ , it means that there is a positive relationship exists between the examined variables and the relationship is significant @  $P 0.00 < 0.01$ , 2 from this result, we accept the hypothesis. This means that a significant relationship exist between Role clarification and Value commitment.

**Ha4:** There is significant relationship between Role Clarification and Alternative Commitment

**Table 4: Correlation Result on the Relationship between Role Clarification and Alienative Commitment**

|                |                  |                         |         |        |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------|
| Spearman's rho | Objectivity      | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000   | .272** |
|                |                  | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000    | .000   |
|                |                  | N                       | 101     | 101    |
|                | Value Commitment | Correlation Coefficient | .272* * | 1.000  |
|                |                  | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000    | .000   |
|                |                  | N                       | 101     | 101    |

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

The result, shown in table 4 above, with  $\rho = 0.272$ , it means a relationship exist between Role clarification and Alternative Commitment in the telecommunication sector. The relationship is also significant at  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$  level. This means that the stated alternative hypothesis is accepted which means that a positive and significant relationship exist between role clarification and Alternative Commitment.

## 5. Discussion of findings

The study from the results has emphasized the link between Bounded ethicality and behavioral outcomes in work organization which extant literature has drawn attention (Bazerman, et al, 1996). Particularly, it has shown a link between bounded ethicality

approach to managing in the telecommunication sector and employee commitment. The commitment construct which has been hitherto discussed with the affective measure has been further expanded based on the study outcome which has inferential shown its link with performance. The findings give support to the works of Salancik (1977) which showed that the commitment to work by employees in the Nigerian work context can be sustained from the perception that workers have on their expected benefits. To them based on this study results, it can be largely attained through a purposeful ethics that presents them with challenging tasks creating the enabling climate for meeting goals. Gaertner and Nollen (1989) had noted that rewards and costs are denying factors for determining level of commitment in an organization, turnover rates in depressed economies therefore must be considered significantly in determining the extent to which the workforce can be made to be dedicated and reduce the challenging tasks associated manpower recruitment and selection. The implication of the author's position is that workers will ultimately consider what he earns as a basis remaining with any organization. From the findings of the study, it is support to the existing position in literature in terms of attracting commitment through Values. Though it is continuance which is based on the cost associated with moving elsewhere, this can be acquired and staid with an individualized approach that gives a sense of belonging and being reward by the organization. Employees' commitment entails varying emotional ties with different key actors in the workplace. Hence, when employees engage in interactions with the organization, supervisor or coworkers, it will affect their job satisfaction and also their commitment to the object of interaction-organization, supervisor, or workgroup.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, the study recommends as follows:

1. Employees should be giving responsibility that allows them to grow. Therefore management should create a window that enables them invest in the company's financial base through this; they have both emotional and financial sense of belongingness that will in turn attract commitment.
2. Rewards in financial firms either as bonus or monthly wages are imperative for continued sustenance of commitment the study has shown, therefore, there should strategic and targeted incentive package that employees consistently look forward to. The implication is that it is seen as leverage in comparison with other and a managerial concern for their wellbeing which is reciprocated with desired commitment to goals.
3. Management should ensure that a common interactional platform that permits all-inclusiveness and enhancing idea sharing be created. This will helps to build the psycho-social tendencies that propel commitment beyond continuance an affective as it were.
4. The part of employees' wages to the company's performance. This will align their interests with the company's revenue and profit goals and will serve as inherent incentive to stay with the company as it grows.

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