

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Employee commitment (EC) has received much attention by scholars in recent times. This is because the achievement of every organizational goal is dependent on the commitment of employees at the workplace. Procedural justice is concerned with employees perceptions associated with the procedure of rewards, outcomes, decision making and participation in decision making process which is one of the dominating factor in the life of an organization. Both procedural justice and affective commitment are variables directly linked with organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to identify the impact of procedural justice on affective commitment. The study is a conceptual reviewed of related literature to find the relationship between the two variables. The results of the study revealed that procedural justice is strongly related to affective commitment. Higher and sustained employee affective commitment in the workplace depends very much on procedural justice. A purposeful organisational justice brings out a good employee behaviour, resulting in employee commitment. Therefore, procedural justice is a strong predictor of affective commitment. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that organizations should increase the level of justice so as to increase the commitment of employees in the organization.

Key Word: Organizational justice, Employee commitment, Procedural justice, Affective commitment

INTRODUCTION

Organizational justice has become an important issue for debates in modern management. This is because it has a vital implication on employees and the organization (Greenberg, in Karim & Rehman, 2012). Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013) stated that organizational justice is a basic requirement for the proper functioning of an organization. It is what holds the employees together and keeps them committed to the organization (Cagliyan et al, 2017). However, despite the importance of organizational justice in uniting workers together and increasing their level of commitment to the organization, treating employees fairly and creating an atmosphere of justice has remained a major challenge to human resource management in modern organizations (Cagliyan et al, 2017). This is why trade unions and judicial institutions came into existence to ensure the application of justice in the industrial setting (Cagliyan et al, 2017).

Managers in modern organizations need to ensure that there is justice in the organization. This is because employees' perception of organizational injustice has a negative implication on their work attitude and behavior (Durrani et al, 2015). Alsalem and Alhajani (2007) noted that employees usually react to inequitable outcomes, lapses in the processes of distributing outcomes as well as unfair interpersonal interactions. To ensure that there is organizational justice, organizational managers need to sensitize all employees on issues relating to outcomes allocations, the processes and procedures for allocating outcomes and interact with all employees in the same manner (Meyer & Smith, 2000). Meyer and Smith (2000) further postulated that managers should periodically organize meetings with all the employees and give them the opportunity to express their opinions and grievances, and provide detailed explanations to them to help clarify issues and misunderstanding. This will help to shape employees' perceptions in such a way that they will perceive justice in the organization.

Greenberg in Rafei-Dehkordi et al (2013) described organizational justice as the fair and equitable behavior of the organization with their employees. Greenberg in Cagliyan et al (2017) further defined organizational justice as employee's perceptions towards organization's behaviours, decisions and actions and how these impact on the employee's attitudes and behaviours at work. It refers to employee's perception of fairness with respect to the organizational processes, interpersonal relationships (interaction) as well as the distribution of outcomes (Biswas et al, 2013). Cropanzano and Greenberg in Ali and Jan (2012) postulated that organizational justice is the overall fairness of the reward system of an organization and the perceived fairness of the actions of individuals responsible for implementing the rewards allocation. The rewards here refer to salary, salary rise, promotion, fringe benefits, incentives and recognition (Cropanzano & Greenberg in Ali & Jan, 2012).

Employee's perceptions of justice or injustice influence their attitudes and behaviours (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). According to Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), employees are likely to exhibit good behaviours at work when they perceive justice and fairness in the organization, but when they perceive injustice in the way in which rewards are allocated, politics in the procedures used in allocating the rewards and unfair interpersonal treatment; they are likely to put up a negative work behaviours such as absenteeism, late coming, lack of job commitment and deliberately decreasing their inputs and productivity. Folger in Okocha and Anyanwu (2016) agreed with Cohen-Charash and Spector's argument when they stated that if organizational policy, decisions, procedures and managerial actions are perceived to be unfair and unjust, the affected employee will develop the feeling of anger, outrage and resentment.

Therefore, proprietors and managers of organisations need to pay close attention to the issue of justice. According to Fuchs & Edwards (2012), justice is a crucial issue in modern management and any manager who fails to ensure that there is justice in their organization is likely to face the risk of losing its workforce, their commitment and citizenship behavior. Matters of fairness are abound to arise in every organization especially when it comes to allocation of rewards, procedures in allocating rewards, assignment of tasks, promotion, interpersonal relationships or interaction (Folorunso et al, 2014). Alsalem and Alhaiani (2007) noted that employees are more concerned about the degree of fairness in the rewards they receive, the procedures for allocating the rewards and their interpersonal treatment. Therefore, issues relating to allocation of monetary resources, hiring of employees, policy making and policy implications that affect employees should be given special attention in terms of justice (Colquitt et al, in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on equity theory and the social exchange theory.

Equity Theory

The equity theory was developed by Adams in 1963. The major components of this theory are inputs and outcomes. According to Adams in Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013), inputs are what employees perceive as their contributions to the exchange, for which they expects a just return. Outcomes are the rewards an employee receives from the exchange which include pay and intrinsic satisfaction (Cohen & Greenberg, in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2913). The equity theory argues that social behaviour is influenced by beliefs that rewards allocation within the same level should be equitable i.e. outcomes should be distributed proportional to the contributions of employees in the same level. The theory further argues than an employee is satisfied when his or her input-output ratio is equal to the input-output ratio of others in comparison (Adams in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013); while perceived inequity through this comparison feels unpleasant, and motivates employee to reduce those unpleasant feelings (Folger & Cropanzano, in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013).

The equity theory explains that an employee usually judges equity or inequity based on what he or she contributes to the organization and what he or she receives as outcomes in comparison to what his or her colleagues in the same level receive (Gichira, 2016). Here, what the employee contributes to the organization connotes the knowledge, experience, time, energy and efforts which he or she puts to ensure that the organization achieves its goals while the outcomes refer to the pay, benefits and recognition he or she receives for the contributions (Gichira, 2016). If what the employee receives from the organization is equitable with what his or her colleagues in the same level receive, then the employee will judge the organization to be fair but where the employee receives less of what his or her colleagues receive, the employee will judge the organization to be exhibiting injustice.

The equity theory tries to explain how employees compare what they receive (outcomes) with those of their colleagues having consider their inputs (knowledge, skills, experience, time and energy) and judge the degree of fairness or injustice in the organization (Karriker & Williams, 2009). Sometimes the comparison may be employees in the same department or organization, or those working in other similar organizations (Demirel & Yucel, 2014). Demirel and Yucel (2014) described the farmer as the perception of internal equity while the latter is referred to as external equity.

Social Exchange Theory

According to Priyankara et al., (2018), the social exchange theory originated in the late 1950s and evolved through the early 1960s. The major contributors to the development of the social exchange theory are George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley and Peter Blau. The theory was developed from the socio-psychological and economic perspectives (Emerson, 1976; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory provided strong guidelines for explaining the relationship between organizational justice and employee commitment. The theory indicates that the social connection at workplace impact the employees' behavior and attitudes (Dalal, 2005). The social exchange theory has been one of the major theoretical perspectives in the field of social psychology since the early writings of Homans (1961) and Blau (1964).

Social exchange is described as voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others (Blau, in Chinomona & Dhurup, 2015). The fundamental premise of the social exchange theory is that it involves an exchange between two parties whereby one party does something and the other party reciprocates. The reciprocated benefits can be in form of economic rewards or social benefits (Yoon & Suh, in Chinomona & Dhurup, 2015).

The social exchange theory is based on the underlying principle that reciprocated benefits bring about social bonds among the exchange parties (Kacmar et al, 2012). This is due to the fact that social exchange creates the feelings of personal obligation, gratitude and trust among the exchange parties, which in turn build a foundation of social solidarity (Yoon & Suh, 2003). The underlying assumption of the social exchange theory is that people create and maintain social relationship on the basis of their expectations that such relationships will benefit the parties. The exchange of benefits (whether intrinsic or extrinsic benefits) independently of normative obligation provide the impetus for social interaction. When one party to the exchange relationship does something for the other party (like providing benefits for the other party), there is bound to be an expectation of some form of valued, future return that is both non-specific and not tied to an explicit market value (Morgeson et al, in Chinomona & Dhurup, 2015).

Concept of Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to employee's perception regarding the processes and procedures employed in the distribution of outcomes (Alsalem & Alhaini, 2007). It reflects the process leading to results (Cagliyan et al, 2017). Steiner and Bertolino in Cagliyan et al (2017) defined procedural justice as the fairness perceptions of procedures and processes that are used to make result-based decisions. Miles (2012) described procedural justice as employee's perception of fairness in the procedures used by management in deciding the allocation of organizational resources. Similarly, Folger and Konovsky in Ali and Jan (2012) conceptualized procedural justice as the degree to which the methods and guidelines for implementing reward allocations are perceived to be fair by those affected by allocation decisions.

Procedural justice is all about the perceived fairness of the means that leads to determine the outcomes (Folger & Konovsky in Jawad et al, 2012). It emphasizes consistency, impartiality and rationality in the process of determining and distributing outcomes (Folger & Konovsky in Okocha & Anyanwu, 2016). Thibaut and Walker in Rahman et al (2016) defined procedural justice as the extent to which employees perceive the fairness of procedure that is applied to reach at outcome decisions. It is basically the perceptions regarding the ways or methods in which decisions are made in the organization (Rahman, et al, 2016). Tepper and

Taylor in Rahman et al (2016) posited that procedure justice is the fairness of the means through which managers make decisions related to resources allocation. It is the degree of fairness in the methods and procedures used by managers to evaluate the contribution of an employee and distribute outcomes.

Outcomes do not merely come into sight rather they result from a specific set of process or procedures (Greenburg, in Rahman et al, 2016). De Cremer in Rahman et al (2016) pointed out that outcome decisions and fair policies give employees the feeling of respect and acceptance as members of the organization. Fuchs and Edwards (2012) noted that procedural justice is an indication that the organization regards, respects and appreciates their employees' efforts. Elovaino et al (2002) stated that procedural justice facilitates cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions in the workplace and enhances psychological well-being of employees with a feeling of satisfaction and morale booster. Kim and Maubourgue in Ajala (2015) posited that fair processes lead to intellectual and emotional recognition which in turn create trust and commitment that build voluntary cooperation in strategy execution goals.

Procedural justice is an important predictor of worker's behaviour in an organizational setting. According to Misuko (2012), procedural justice or injustice influences employees' attitudes and behaviour in the workplace. He explained that if employees perceive the processes and procedures used in allocating rewards to be fair, they are likely to exhibit good work behaviour such as regular work attendance, job commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviours. On the other hand, employees will display negative work behaviours (such as increased absenteeism, lateness to work, lack of job commitment, etc.) if they perceives bias and impartiality in the processes leading to the allocation of rewards. The principles that promote perceptions of procedural justice are consistency in application of criteria, suppression of bias, use of accurate information, opportunity for error, representativeness, and ethical treatment (Fassina et al., 2008; Heponiem, 2007)

Consistency in Procedures

Consistency in procedures simply means that management should use the same procedures in deciding the allocation of organizational resources to all employees. Procedural justice requires high degree of consistency in treating workers at the same (Jawad et al, 2012). It emphasizes consistency in the process of determining and distributing outcomes (Okocha & Anyanwu, 2016). Rahman et al (2016) stated that if there is consistency in the procedures used in allocating organizational resources, employees will put in more efforts to ensure that the organization achieves its goals, Tepper and Taylor in Rahman et al (2016) posited that consistency in procedures used by managers in resources allocation would make employees to exhibit commitment and good behaviour at work.

Fairness

This simply means that all workers in the organization are treated fairly in the workplace. It means that there is absence of favouritism and nepotism in the organization. Fairness is the absence of bias which is a statement or action in favour of or against a worker and this comes in form of unfair treatment, prejudicial or closed-minded. A manager may develop bias for or against an employee simply because he does not like the person, his family member or where the employee comes from. Whenever such a manager is making decisions regarding the procedures for allocating organizational resources, he tends to use flawed reasoning. Bias kills the morale and love which an employee has for an organization. Unfair treatment makes an employee to exhibit negative attitude to work which can also lead to absenteeism, poor commitment to work and low productivity (Ajala, 2015).

Lack of bias would promote procedural justice in the workplace. Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013) stated that when there is absence of bias in an organization, the employees will feel an atmosphere of procedural justice and exhibit good behaviour at work. When an employee perceives bias in the procedures used in allocating rewards, he or she is likely to exhibit a negative behaviour at workplace such as irregular work attendance, job commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013). Misuko (2012) confirmed this when he stated that an employee will display negative work behaviours if he or she perceives bias and impartiality in the processes leading to the allocation of rewards. Skarlicki et al (2008) stated that when employees feel unfairly treated, they can engage in organizational retaliation – defined as the tendency to ‘make the wrongdoer pay.

Ethics

Ethics is a philosophical term originating from Greek word “ethos” meaning custom or character (Mihelic, et al. 2010). It is the science of right and wrong, the science of moral principles, the science of moral judgment and conduct (Kocaba & Karakose, 2009). Mihelic et al (2010) stated that ethics is concerned with describing and prescribing moral requirements and behaviours, which suggests that there are acceptable and unacceptable ways of behaving that serve as a function of philosophical principles. Sims in Mihelic et al (2010) defined ethical behaviour as that behaviour which is morally accepted as “good” and “right” as opposed to “bad” or “wrong” in a given situation. Komives in Kocaba and Karakose (2009) pointed out five principles in making ethical decisions which include: respecting autonomy, doing no harm, being just, benefiting others and being faithful.

Ethics as a moral principles helps to regulate one’s behaviour (Welsh, 2007). Mihelic et al (2010) posited that ethical dilemmas are present in uncertain situations in which different interests, values, beliefs pertaining to multiple stakeholders are in conflict.

Unethical behaviour has become the order of the day as more and more managers are being accused of unethical practices. Almost every day there are reports of foul play in organizations orchestrated by managers (Sinha & Mishra, 2011). The present managers in our organizations need to do everything within their power to restore the employees’ confidence and trust in their ability to pilot the affairs of the organization towards the realization of its goals. To regain employees’ confidence and trust, managers must apply the professional ethics in the course of discharging their managerial duties.

Managers need to show to their subordinates that it is possible to implement moral values and still succeed. Such managers need to advocate for ethical justification and build such concept into their subordinated. Quick (2011) stated that educational leaders must be constantly vigilant about their actions as they speak volumes about the values that they support. He further stated that it is impossible for a manager to take an action that does not signify some comment about how things should be done and everyone is watching, especially the staff and students.

Concept of Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is defined as an employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen in Paramanandam, 2017). Foulouronso et al (2014) defined affective commitment as the commitment which an employee demonstrates for an organization based on his or her emotional bonds with such organization. They further postulated that an employee who demonstrates affective commitment brings a sense of belonging and identifies with the organizational values and goals. Guha and Chimote (2012) noted that workers who are committed affectively to their organization work

continuously for the growth of the organization. Chinomona and Dhurup (2015) added that workers who are committed affectively to their organization always stay with the organization even in difficult times and put in more efforts to ensure that the organization survives. Such workers believe in the values and goals of the organization and work towards ensuring that the organization achieves its set goals.

Every organization desires to have workers who are committed affectively to the organization. This is because workers who are affectively committed to their organization identifies with the organization and believe strongly in the values and goals of the organization (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Danish et al (2014) stated that employees with strong affective commitment are more valuable employees to the organization because they put in more efforts to ensure that the organization achieves its goals. Meyer and Allen in Mohammed and Anisa (2012) argued that employees with high affective commitment exhibit more willingness to performance organizational citizenship behaviour when compared to other employees who are not affectively committed to the organization.

An organization can make its employees to develop an emotional bond with the organization's interest by linking the rewards to individual's performance. When employees develop a strong emotional bond with the values and goals of the organization, it will help to reduce their turnover rate and absenteeism and consequently increase the productivity (Mohammed & Anisa, 2012). The employees will be willing to continue to work in the organization on an affective and volunteer basis (Ozdem, 2012). Meyer and Allen in Paramanandam (2017) stated that affective commitment is determined by a number of factors which include equity in outcomes distribution, role clarity, peer cohesion, goal clarity, receptiveness by management, feedback, participation, job challenge and dependability.

Relationship between procedural justice and affective commitment

Viswesvaran and Ones (2002) carried out a meta-analysis on the relationship between organizational justice and work attitudes/behaviour. The findings showed that procedural justice has a strong relationship with affective commitment. The study conducted by Colquitt et al. (2001) also revealed that procedural justice had a positive and significant relationship with employee commitment.

Loi et al (2006) empirically examined justice perceptions and its relationship to organizational commitment and intent to leave. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and influential statistics and the results revealed that procedural justice significantly enhanced perceived organizational support which subsequently increased organizational commitment and lowered intent to leave.

Hassan (2002) investigated employees' perception of equity and the role justice played in employees' commitment to the organization and intent to leave. The data collected were analyzed using percentage and frequency analysis, mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA. The results revealed that procedural justice significantly influences employees' commitment and intent to leave.

Rathore and Sen (2017) carried out an empirical study on perceived organizational justice and organizational commitment in the information and technology (IT) sector in India. The data collected from a sample 90 employees working in IT sector were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, factor analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings of the study revealed that procedural justice have a significant positive relationship with employee commitment.

Rahman et al (2016) carried out a study to determine the effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment. Their study focused on distributive and procedural justice and correlates them to measures of organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative commitment). The researchers adopted the cross sectional survey research design and used questionnaires to elicit data from 500 employees in three higher education institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The result study revealed that procedural justice has a positive and significant effect on employee commitment.

Ponnu and Chuah (2010) empirically examined the relationship that exists among organizational justice, organizational commitment and turnover intention of Malaysian employees. The researchers employed the descriptive survey research design and positivists research paradigm. The findings showed that employee's perception of distributive justice significantly correlated to organizational commitment and turnover intention. The study also reported that procedural justice has a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment and turnover intention.

Conclusion

The concept of procedural justice as presented above and its consequent impact on affective commitment is a very important and contemporary topic of discussion and interest amongst management scholars. Procedural justice which is the degree of fairness in the methods and procedures used by organizational managers to evaluate the contribution of employees and distribute outcomes is a proven organizational practice as discovered from other studies. Literature abound indicates the existence of a strong and positive relationship between procedural justice and affective commitment. A good organizational justice system serves to encourage greater and better employee commitment and worker behavior. Elovaino et al (2002) stated that procedural justice facilitates cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions in the workplace and enhances psychological well-being of employees with a feeling of satisfaction and morale booster.

Therefore, higher and sustained employee affective commitment in the workplace depends very much on procedural justice. A purposeful organisational justice brings out a good employee behaviour, resulting in employee commitment. It is therefore essentially germane for institutions of higher learning in Bayelsa State embed in their corporate culture provision for procedural justice for appreciating and distributing resources in the workplace and enhance employee commitment. From the examination of texts and empirical review of works of other scholars and researchers, one can safely conclude that organisations with procedural justice culture will increase the affective commitment of employees in the workplace. Drawing inference from the position of other management scholars and researchers, the study concludes that procedural justice has a very strong impact on employee affective commitment.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the result, the study highly recommends that owners and managers of organisations should place emphasis on procedural justice within the organisation as a way of consistency in procedure, fairness, and ethical conduct so as to improve the affective commitment of employees in the workplace. Doing this will instigate a positive work behaviour among employees.

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