ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: A PREREQUISITE FOR ACTUATING EMPLOYEE LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

Moral decay in our society has crept into our organizations today. To the point where most individuals, group and organizations no longer worry about maintaining standard ethical norms that drives organizational values and retain valuable employees, even when the cost of retaining an existing employee is almost less than half the cost of hiring a new one. This review is designed to draw the attention of organizations to how they can attract and retain employees who can add value to their organization through ethical leadership approach. An in-depth scoping review was conducted on the concepts of ethical leadership and employee loyalty, as well as relevant theories and generalizations to explain human behaviour in this context. It was concluded that ethical leaders inspired employees by behavioural examples, making such employees to be engaged, committed, self-motivated, and satisfied with their jobs. Lastly, ethical leadership induces employee moral behavior, employee consistency, higher levels of trust and productivity, a positive work environment, and better employee-employer relationship, which in turn enhances employee conscious decision-making, increased marketing activity, customer retention, brand advocacy, less absenteeism, organizational identification, and more commitment towards work.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Perceived Leader Integrity, Authentic Leadership, Employee Loyalty, Cognitive Loyalty, Affective Loyalty, and Behavioural Loyalty.

Introduction

The contributions of employees cannot be relegated to a mere seeming commensurate consideration. This shows that employees cannot be given monetary value that is equitable to their efforts in aiding the organization to earn profit and further expand the profit margin for such organizations. In essence, employees are the most valuable asset to any organization, because employees champion the course of the business and largely determine its success or failure, they are the face of the organization, they usually come into the organization with all their skills, knowledge, and experiences, they are the first customers to the organization, they are the people who nurture the organization, a greater percentage of employees give almost everything to move the organization forward, they are the face of the organization (hence they are brand ambassadors) and they are essential to the production of goods and/or services (Hobson, 2019). Thus, employees perform several tasks and exact huge and enormous efforts to help the organization achieve predetermined objectives. In specific turns, motivated employees reach new targets regularly, meet (and sometimes surpass) the demands and needs of customers, and even develop new and innovative products (or better shape existing ones for the benefit of the organization).

Imagine earning the loyalty of such employees. Such organizations are most likely not just to be sustained, but they will survive, thrive, and become the key player in the industry within which they operate. Hence, the success of any organization is largely tied to employees' loyalty. Employee loyalty is seemingly a blanket concept that represents a set of emotions which makes employees feel attached to their current employer (management), job, and organization; which makes them satisfy their interest, time, and energy in favour of the organization (Brown et al., 2005; Collins, 2019; Tende et al., 2017). Collins (2017) opined that longevity in the job does not represent loyalty on the part of the employee. Some may not even subscribe to or support the goals designed to achieve growth for the organization. Collins (2019) further submitted that loyal employees; show pride and respect to their organization, (2) Are inquisitive and are ready to learn, (3) stand for perseverance, dedication, and leadership, (4) don't fall for just anything. (5) Push the limits of productivity in the organization, (6) speeds up production within a short time. Today, employee loyalty is seemingly farfetched, especially among younger employees. These millennials who are mostly information technology sorry appear to have huge information about better job offers or at least they know where to find some. For the sole reason of succession planning, organizations have to deal with hiring these millennials and engender some kind of loyalty that may be required to retain such employees. Interestingly, one of the several ways in which the required kind of loyalty can be earned from these kinds of employees is to adopt the ethical leadership approach. This is so because strong leadership is likely to inspire strong loyalty.

Ethical leadership tends to prevent organizational scandals, toxic workplace culture, harassment and discrimination, unethical leadership, unrealistic and conflicting goals, questionable use of technology, ethical dilemma, unethical accounting, lack of health and safety, nepotism and favouritism, corporate espionage, and abuse of leadership authority (Holton, 2020). Ethical leadership can also help organizations gain more customers and partnerships and ultimately increase income in the long term. Again, ethical leadership has been known to provoke confidence in potential investors, build customer loyalty, establish interpersonal trust among the organizational management with its internal (employees) connected (suppliers, customers, and competitors), and external (government and regulatory agencies) stakeholders. Ethical leadership helps to boost performance, and cultivate and

maintain high morale, self-satisfaction, safe legal practices, and createa positive organizational culture, a healthier work environment, improve all aspects of organizational life, build good habits, improve emotional wellbeing, and prevent scandalous situations (CMOETeam, 2020; Kuligowski, 2020). Stein (2020) opines that ethical leadership helps in ethical decision-making as it aids the elimination of emotions that could result in wrong decisions. Stein (2020) further maintained that ethics are the core foundation of great leadership by instilling a strong sense of discipline that changes the dynamics and direction of the organization towards attaining success. In this sense, ethical leaders tend to develop the mindset that makes them appear as authentic, transformational, and servant leaders who will do all it takes to chart a better course for the organization that will make all the difference and needed change.

Theoretical Underpinning
Traditionally, it is empirically logical to underpin studies with relevant theories that could give further meaning to the concepts under review. In this study, the social exchange theory and deontological ethics model are adopted to stand as undergirded theories as they provide foundational support for employee loyalty and ethical leadership. George Casper Homans, an American sociologist has been given credit for developing social exchange theory in his 1958 essay captioned; social behavior as exchange (Mcray, 2015; Roeckelein, 2018). Social exchange theory is a psychological and sociological model that examines social behavior or human behavior within a social context concerning the cost and benefit analysis in the interaction between two parties. Based on the submissions of Homans, the society, community, and groups are perceived as social systems. In this sense, Homan's social exchange theory is based on equilibration, expectancy, and distributive justice of economic benefits, costs, and risks. More specifically, individuals in a social, professional, and romantic relationship (or even friendship) make statistical calculations of the benefits they get concerning the number of efforts they put in such relationships; if they are commensurate.

An English epistemologist and philosopher, Charlie Dunbar Broad in his 1930 book titled; Five Types of Ethical Theory used the term "Deontological Ethics". The term deontological ethics or deontology in moral philosophy. Although, this concept was coined by Jeremy Bentan in 1916 as a synonym to central ethics. It represents a normative ethical theory that holds the view that an action should be tied to whether such action in itself is right or wrong under a series or set of rules, rather than based on the consequences of such action (Beauchamp, 1991). Walter (2005) opines that deontological ethics or deontology is sometimes referred to as rule-based or duty-obligation ethics. The term "code de de'ontologie" is the French Coinage of the ward deontology which gives a more general sense to the meaning of deontology as an ethical code or professional ethics that deals with the ethical practices adopted by organizations check the behavior of organization members and help them understand the difference between right and wrong in daily operational decisions. The central idea about deontology is better narrated by Immanuel Kart (Kantianism) a German philosopher. Kantianism proposes two moral submissions. (1). Kart argues that for an individual to act in a way that could be deemed morally right, such an individual must see such actions as obligatory (i.e. they must act from the point of performing their duty). (2). It is not the consequence of the action that makes it wrong or right, but the motives of the actor (Kelly, 2006). Human concluded by summarizing his theory into three core elements namely; success, stimulus, and deprivation propositions. The first element holds that individuals who are rewarded for their actions are likely to repeat such actions. Secondly, if a stimulus has resulted in to reward in the past; the more individuals are likely to

respond to it, and lastly, further rewards are less valuable if similar rewards were often received in the recent past (Roeckelein, 2018; Homans, 1958).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is a form of leadership that is founded on the principles of ethical values, beliefs, and respect for the rights and dignity of others. It thus emphasizes the need for trust, honesty, fairness consideration, charisma, and so on (Brown et al., 2005). This form of leadership in which individuals demonstrate good conduct that is appropriate and acceptable in every aspect of life. This is because an ethical leader should lead by example, champion the course of ethics, and should communicate effectively to enable and aid the flow of events (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Kuligowski, 2020). Kalshoven et al., (2011) pointed out that ethnical leaders have the propensity to create productive relationships and positive environment at the individual, group, and organizational levels while enhancing the well-being of the individual, positive energy for the group or team, and positive attitudes that enhance the health of the organization. Kar (2014) citing Bill Grace suggested that similarly, ethical leadership proposes the 4-V model that encompasses values, vision, voice, and virtue which tend to align with internal morals and beliefs as well as behaviors and actions that occur within the external sphere for the sole reason of the general good. Kar (2014) submitted that this model is the characteristics that help in creating "morally balanced leaders". The entire essence of being morally balanced as an ethical leader is to create a world in which the future is all-inclusive, positive, and fertile for the potentials of all individuals (Kar, 2014).

Again, Shakeel et al. (2019) propose a model known as concentric circles of ethical leadership which encompasses five characteristics of an ethical leader. These characteristics are in the following sequence; virtuous leader, positive leader, moral leader, professionally grounded leader, and transformational leader. It is imperative to note that they follow this sequence from the core of the concentric circle to the outermost part-which represents beliefs and moral standards to behaviours and actions. Again, ethical leaders are usually carried away by doing the right thing. Although, it is difficult to adequately define what is "right", but an ethical leader always tries to do what they truly believe to be right, even when it is seemingly inconvenient, unprofitable, and unpopular. In this sense, such leaders stand for justice honesty, respect for others, value-driven decision-making, humane, value awareness, initiative, no tolerance for ethical violation (Den Hartog, 2015; Kar, 2014; Meine& Dunn, 2013; Miao et al., 2013). In light of the above, ethical leaders are supposed to lead by example, communicate ethics, publicly champion the significance of ethical behaviours, hire seemingly ethical employees, and so on. Within the context of an organization, ethical leadership or ethical organization have four main areas which include; resources (monetary and human); processes (Procedures, goal attainment, and objectives) outputs (products and services), and outcomes (profits or customer satisfaction/losses and customer dissatisfaction) (Dion, 2012; Van Wart, 2014; Voegtlin, 2016; Shakeel et al., 2018).

Yukl et al., (2011) reviewed several studies on ethical leadership and submitted that ethical leadership can be dimensionalized using perceived leader integrity, and authentic leadership.Perceived leader integrity is mostly conceived as a core characteristic of effective leaders that should be mostly considered. Perceived leader integrity is the consistency of the wards and actions of a leader as an entity (Moorman et al., 2013). In the same vein, Moorman et al., (2013) noted that perceived leader consistency. This means the leader act for the general good, treat people fairly, protects the rights of others, treats people with care and respect, and serves to improve society and honesty. Authentic leadership is a form of

leadership that emphasizes honest and legitimate relationships with the followers as he/she values their contributions which are based on ethical foundations (Gardner et al., 2011). In general terms, authentic leaders are positive-minded individuals who stand for trust at all times and promote openness. Such leaders always try to build trusting relationships and generate enthusiastic support from their subordinates. Such leaders are known for improving performance at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Garder et al., (2011) noted authentic leaders have distinctive qualities such as; self-awareness, rational transparency, balanced processing capability, and strong internalized moral perspective.

Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty represents a state of devotion, submission, and dedication of employees to the sustainability, survival, and success of their organization, while holding on to the mindset that being a member of such as organization is in their best interest (Antoncic & Antoncic, 2011; Elegido, 2013; Wan, 2012). For instance, participating in goal setting, performance feedback, supportive communications system, impartiality in routine assessments, objective procedures and measures of routine; adequate pay, welfare, rewards and compensation, quality of supervisory authority; favorable developmental openings and clearly stated guidelines defining suitable work behaviour and demands (Prabhakar, 2016; Tende et al., 2017), are perceived as initiators of loyalty on the part of the employee. Antoncic and Antoncic (2011), and Wan (2013) noted that the loyalty of an employee is seen as a psychological connection to the firm and is instinctive out of increased satisfaction and fulfillment on the part of the employee. This satisfaction and fulfillment may result from a method of series of internal assessment regarding the expectancy level seemingly by the employee to have been met or seen to have been exceeded, then satisfaction and fulfillment increase at a very high rate. The loyalty of the employee may then grow into a widespread emotional attitude towards the firm and/or firm. Put differently, a more satisfied and fulfilled employee is regarding their work environment as warm, and the more likely they will grow a sense of belonging and pledge towards the firm in the long run. As stated earlier; the settings of the may have dissimilar stakeholders internal, connected, and external interest groups, the course, and extent of the loyalty of these respective allies are dissimilar.Firms tend to follow the object of allegiance for the owner, the employees, the society, and the customer. Without devotion, the various group(s) of the firm, their plan for accomplishment of stated objectives of the firm may not be possible. The loyalty of the worker is obvious to the clients and it's almost impossible to get constant patronage without strong emotionally devoted employees.

In essence, however, firms need employees that are loyal so they can increase market share. Loyal employees will want to work devotedly, steadfastly, and faithfully and produce outputs of the finest value and quantity. Finest outputs will bring about the loyalty of the client, which is very central to the routine of the firm. There is a strong affiliation between the loyalty of the employee and the activities they take in setting and meeting very high routine targets. Frempong and Agbenyo (2018) opined that a loyal employee would want to stand with the firm, whatever the situation may be, as compared to an employee who is not loyal to the firm. Firms with employees that are faithful, devoted, and loyal tend to have a central viable benefit and a developed rate of growth, profitability, and survival as compared to firms with unfaithful, undevoted, and disloyal employees, this is because the long-term success and disappointments of such a firm depend squarely upon the worth and devotion of the individuals it has under its employee (Khuong & Tien, 2013). It has been revealed that faithful, devoted, committed, and keen employees are truly assets to businesses and firms

alike; and their placement and longevity of the occupation is of utmost importance to accomplishing the stated mission and purposes of the firm; as they convey faithful and trustworthy customers so firms are in great need of the capability to identify, develop and retain them such employees for its benefit (Aityan & Gupta, 2012).To further buttress this point, the loyalty of the employee can also be perceived as a form of a pledge, that may require practical and deliberate steps of the employee to bring forward the interests of the firm that have them under their employees even when it will ring about them forfeiting some things that are of great interest to them beyond what would be legally and morally required of them as their duties (Elegido, 2013). Because the loyalty and/or faithfulness of the employee are so paramount, it is yet sometimes indefinable, equivocal, and unpredictable at some point (Khuong & Tien, 2013). In light of the above, Dutta and Dhir (2021) submitted that employee loyalty could be measured in terms of its cognitive, affective, and behavioural components. It is imperative to note that cognitive and affective loyalty is linked to attitudinal disposition.

Cognitive loyalty on the part of employees allows them to critically assess and understand certain situations and scenarios in the organization, and eventually make informed decisions that would either positively or negatively affect their organizational life. In dissecting this construct, cognition connects a mental state, process, or action of obtaining knowledge, acquiring information, and gaining understanding through practical experience and the use of sense. It tends to encompass several aspects of intellectualism. Such aspects may include; attention, formation of knowledge, memorization measurement and evaluation, critical reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making, deep comprehension, and production of language (Ardila, 2018). The cognitive process applies existing knowledge to generate new and widely acceptable knowledge (Ardila, 2018; Blomberg, 2011). Loyalty typically denotes unswerving allegiance and faithfulness to commitment and/or obligations. Mohammed and Mahas (2015) noted that cognitive loyalty is a key factor in the employee loyalty model in the field of management. Hence, it is traditionally the first stage of the loyalty chat. It is one aspect of loyalty discovered more recently which tends to allow the employee consciously involve in decision-making and the evaluation of alternatives. Within the context of cognitive loyalty, employees are seemingly rational in their thinking and belief, and logical in the way and manner they make decisions (Mohammed & Mahsa, 2015). Thus, employees are conscious of the number of efforts they put into organizational processes against what they get. In the event where they are not adequately compensated or their efforts are not commensurate with their compensation or consideration, they may which to shift their services to other organizations that may be willing to appreciate them more. This shows that the level of attachment of employees to the organization may not be deep.

Affective loyalty relates to an underlying experience of feeling, mood, and emotions, or psychological disposition of employees who are seemingly kind and affectionate towards an organization. At best, affective loyalty deals with an emotionally charged feeling that is linked to a deep love for one's activity, at worse, it could simply relate to a pleasant feeling like satisfaction or delight (Davies et al., 2017; Khuong & Tie, 2013). This demonstrates a strong positive emotional response to the task, functions, and responsibilities of one's work as a whole. Hulin and Judge (2003) investigated the interrelationship between the subjective wellbeing and affective disposition of employees. In this study, Hulin and Judge attempted to study the correlation between the tendency to have positive or negative emotions and the perceived level of satisfaction an employee gets on the job. After a careful analysis of all the data obtained for this study, Hulin and Judge (2003) submitted that the affective disposition

of employees has a significant impact on their subjective wellbeing. This means that subjective well-being can positively influence the level of satisfaction employees to get on the job. This is an indication that, aside from the content and characteristics of the job, any form of affection the employee holds towards their organization could go a long way to determine the level of satisfaction they tend to derive working with such organizations or performing their task and responsibilities. This shows that job satisfaction which could be born out of affective loyalty on the part of the employee could positively affect the personal life of the employee in question, especially if their job is befitting and has a friendly work environment. This is a sign that employees who show affective loyalty towards their job, management, and organization should be taken seriously to help them remain that way throughout their stay in the organization.

Behavioural loyalty depicts the actions and reactions of the employees towards or against individuals, groups, processes, and other elements of the organization. Behavior succinctly represents mannerisms and actions demonstrated by individuals, systems, organisms, or artificial entities in conjunction with themselves, their physical environment. It tends to depict how one acts or conducts oneself especially as it relates to dealing with others (Minton & Khate, 2014). For instance, employees whose behaviours are favourable to the organization are more likely to never criticize their colleagues or management in the presence of a non-member of the organization, employees who are loyal in their behavior tends to treat others with a high level of human decency, they tend to tell one what are least want to hear; they tell one the hard truth to make one better. Such employees tend to support each other in public even when they disagree in private. Akhigbe and Ifeyinwa (2017) noted that employers are always interested in employees who are seemingly loyal to management; this is because most organizations tend to make progress or thrive. Maznah et al. (2010) posit that organizations tend to even make it a top priority to source for, attract, hire, and retain employees who are seemingly loyal because of their immense positive impact on the overall survival of the organization. On a similar note, Noah and Steve (2012) opine that it makes logical sense to study and understand the behavior of potential employees that may be of benefit to the organization. Akhigbe and Ifeyinwa (2017) submitted that the behavior of employees is unpredictable, hence organizations are supposed to be sensitive towards the behavioural components of the employees to enable them to mitigate or curb labour.

Ethical Leadership and Employee Loyalty: An Empirical Insight

On one side, Dinc and Aydemir (2014) examined ethical leadership and employee behaviours with mediating factors such as ethical climate and employee attitudes. They submitted that the introduction of ethical climate, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment aided ethical leadership which in turn induced good citizenship behavior on the part of employees. Kang (2019) attempts to determine what enhances work performance. Hence, Kang (2019) introduced ethical leadership to study employees in South Korea and found out that the perceived salience of an ethical code is enhanced by the ethical leadership disposition of managers, which in turn triggered higher work performance by employees. Agha et al. (2017) investigated ethical leadership alongside employee commitment in Nigeria. They submitted that treating employees equally can spark active commitment from all employees. Agha et al. (2017) submitted that ethical leadership influences employee's commitment and employee's integrity. Metwally et al. (2019) try to understand how ethical leadership shapes employee's readiness to change with help of organizational culture of effectiveness can bring about a positive response to lack of readiness to change with good ethical leadership in place. Thus,

efficient management that is composed of ethical leadership characteristics is a critical factor for building employee loyalty. This is because ethical leaders boost employee morale and help them feel excited about their job(s) as loyal employees are key elements for organizational success in the long term.

On the flip side, Turkyilmaz et al., (2011) examined the loyalty of public sector employees in Turkey concerning job satisfaction and found out that good working conditions bring about satisfaction on the job. They added that this satisfaction induces loyalty on the part of employees. Varma et al., (2018) investigated the loyalty of employees in the information technology (IT) sector in India and found out that supervisory support, job security, career development are predominant factors of job satisfaction that induce employee loyalty. Tariq et al (2017) examined employee loyalty through organizational attributes in Pakistani Telecom. Sector. They found out that perceived organizational support, job involvement, employee engagement, and distributive justice have positively influenced employee loyalty. Frempong et al. (2018) investigated job satisfaction on employees and how it influences commitment as a comparative analysis of some selected sectors in Ghana. They found that ethical human resource practices have they tend to elicit employee loyalty and commitment. Hence, employees are satisfied with their job.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications
Finally, as one who is guided by high respect for ethical beliefs and values, and for the dignity and rights of others; ethical leaders are expected to define and align their values, hire people who have similar orientation, become bias-free at all times, promote open communication, lead subordinates by example, and become leaders that can be emulated. This will enable them to induce ethical behaviours, and expected positive work outcomes in employees. To elicit the optimum attainment of predetermined organizational objectives. In any case, this shows that ethical leaders inspired employees by behavioural examples, making such employees to be engaged, committed, self-motivated, and satisfied with their jobs. Lastly, ethical leadership induces employee moral behavior, employee consistency, higher levels of trust and productivity, a positive work environment, and better employee-employer relationship, which in turn enhances employee conscious decision-making, increased marketing activity, customer retention, brand advocacy, less absenteeism, organizational identification, and more commitment towards work. This would make such employees nurse the feeling that their organization has good intentions towards them which will ultimately make such employees continue to do their best for the organization while demonstrating loyalty towards their job, loyalty towards management, and loyalty towards the organization. Thus, ethical leadership should be adopted, institutionalized, and implemented in a bid to achieve employee retention, reduced hiring cost, and strong leadership.

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