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Employee Commitment and Organizational Performance

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Abstract:
Employee commitments have received much attention in both research and practice as a result of its potential impact on several organisational outcomes. The study explores the effect of employee commitment on organisational performance. This is with the view that the construct of effective employee commitment is built on the foundation of job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, etc. Employee commitment is important to the competitiveness of any organisation; particularly in the current business world. Thus, it was found that employee commitment significantly impacts on organisational performance.

Keywords: Commitment, employee commitment, organisational performance

1. Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that human resources are the most important asset in any organisation. In a turbulent economic environment characterized by high staff turnover and brain drain, human resources practitioners' major challenges are to find a way of attracting, engaging and retaining creative and dedicated staff, committed to the organisation and to determine which working conditions stimulate employees to give their best, to go beyond what is expected in the face of difficulties to enhance organisational performance (Newstorm, 2007). In modern organizations employees are expected to be proactive and show initiative, collaborate smoothly with others and be responsible for their own professional development (Schaufeli, Salonova, Gonzalez-Roma and Barker, 2002). Organizations need employees who are energetic and dedicated to their work.

Modern business organisations are knowledge intensive organisations where skilled autonomous professionals interact extensively with internal and external parties (Bambacas and Bordia, 2009). Professionals found that their employer, team and clients represent potential focus of employee commitment (Newstorm, 2007). This cross boundary working creates the need and opportunity for employees to be committed not only to their employing organisations but also to other parties with whom they interact such as their team, their clients and their profession (Becker, 1992).

Committed employees are critical to ensuring a highly productive workforce. By understanding the level of commitment, organisations can determine ways to improve organisational practices for the retention of valuable members of staff (Bambacas, 2010). Sufficiently motivated employees tend to produce outstanding results, such as increased productivity and improved profitability. Hence, employee commitment is of strategic importance for organizations. By keeping employees motivated and committed, organisations do not have to be much concerned about employees leaving the organization.

Despite an organization having all the apparatuses and resources, it will not flourish without qualified, skilful, knowledgeable and committed employees. An organisation with committed employees has a highly competitive advantage including higher output with less employee turnover, and making it be an employee's choice (Sully and Orly, 2008). Commitment can be stated as the desire of workers to remain as members of a particular organisation because of the organisation's belief, values, goals and also the desire of the employees to strive to suit in the organisation (Sully and Orly, 2008). Employees who are fully committed have no intensions to exist, as they can do anything so as to ensure they promote the accomplishment of the company's goals, mission, and vision with the intension to remain part of the organisation. These employees tend to offer services whole heartedly to the organisation and in return love their work. In the case where commitment is absent, the organisation will experience employee's absenteeism, poor performance at work and high rate of turnover among other negative factors that may affect organisation high performance and productivity.

Employee commitment is highly valued in organisations because it is typically assumed to reduce withdrawal behaviour such as lateness and absenteeism. Hence there is no doubt that these values appear to have potential consequences for overall organisational performance and productivity.

Some experts define commitment as both a willingness to persist in a course of action and reluctance to change plans, often owing to a sense of obligation to study the course. Commitment requires an investment of time as well as mental and emotional energy, and manifest itself in distinct behaviour. Also, commitment has an emotional component. People usually experience and express positive feelings towards an entity whom they are committed to. Commitment also has a rational element. Most people consciously decide to make commitments, then they thoughtfully plan and carry out the actions required to fulfil them. Commitment requires an investment of time as well as mental and emotional energy; so that it can be sustained through reciprocation, with which its intensity is affected.

Commitment is an employee's personal attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the employing organisation, resulting in strong belief in the organisation's goals and values, and put in extra effort on behalf of the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1984). High performing companies recognize that employee commitment is a major contributing factor towards sustaining long term success and creating values. Meyer et al (2002) posited that commitment is the degree to which an individual identifies with the organisation and commit to its goals.

Though different definitions of commitment exist, some common themes emerge that tend to demonstrate employee commitment by evaluating employee's satisfaction with their work and pride in their employer, the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do for work and the perception that their employer values their innovative supports to the organisation. It is therefore an important responsibility of management to secure employee commitment to the organisation.

Clearly, commitment can potentially translate into variable business results for an organization among which are enhanced performance and productivity. To help reap the benefits of a committed workforce in any organisation, there is need to provide guidelines for understanding and measuring employee commitment in the organisation. Adopting a deliberate focus on commitment requires organizations to recognize the fundamental role that employees play in the success of organisations. This means thinking beyond the traditional emphasis on the physical investment capital and incorporating the value of human capital into the calculation of success. These days the success of an organisation is even more dependent on having a stable and committed workforce whose contributions culminates into productive group actions (Armstrong, 2003).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Commitment

Employee commitment can take different forms. As a result, it is often seen as a Human Resource variable which is difficult to define. The context, direction and development of commitment, as well as the extent to which commitment influences behaviour can result in confusion and debate. Commitment could be taken to mean a connection to a goal; being bound to a goal or the determination in respect of a goal, regardless of the origin of the goal. Believing in a goal and wanting to achieve it also reflects a certain degree of commitment. Commitment could also be to an organization: a psychological state that binds an individual to the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1984). As a result, employees are more loyal to an organization and less likely to leave. It could also mean a connection to a job; the probability that someone continues to work in that job and feels psychologically bound to it. And it could as well mean someone's attitude towards their work.

Commitment is an employee's personal attachment, to one or more targets in a work environment (Armstrong, 2003). He added that the top three drivers of employee commitment are satisfaction, fairness and care, and concern for employees. Put simply, committed employees want to enjoy their work, feel that they are appreciated, and know they are making a contribution to their company's strategic objectives. Additionally, employees who have trust in their leadership, and are trusted by their leadership, have greater dedication and are ultimately more proactive on the job (Vance, 2006). People are simultaneously committed to multiple entities, such as economic, educational, financial, familial, political and religious institutions (Cohen, 2003). They also commit themselves to specific task, as well as to their employer, co-workers, supervisors and customers. Commitment manifests itself in distinct behaviour such as people devoting time and energy to fulfil their job responsibilities as well as their family, personal and spiritual obligations.

Employee commitment refers to psychological attachment of employees to their work place. Commitment to organisation is positively related to such desirable outcomes such as job satisfaction and negatively related to such outcomes as absenteeism. Employee commitment is often referred to as 'employee loyalty'. This is because employee commitment is the loyalty to and support of workforce towards the goals of an organization. Commitment as a construct reflect the extent to which employees identify with the organization's work ethic, cooperate with its goals and objectives, and contribute to corporate performance. An employee's commitment can be seen in the degree to which he is committed to work, and employer can infer from the feelings, attitudes, behaviour and actions whilst at work (Vance, 2006).

An employees' commitment is their believe that their future is tied to that of the organisation and expresses their willingness to make personal sacrifices for the organization. Thus, it should be noted that the more an organization is dedicated to taking care of its employee; it is that the employee will take care of the organization. Commitment therefore is intrinsically determined by the employee's perception that their organisation has an ethical culture that leads to performance enhancing outcomes within the organization, increasing loyalty and support of goals.

Clearly, there had been several different answers to what is employee commitment. All of which relates to why employee commitment is so important to organizations. Employee commitment has been defined as the strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization (Mowday, Sleers, and Porter, 1979). This definition has since been used as the basis for a wealth research.

Employee commitment is a crucial work attitude (Morris and Sherman, 1981). It has also been defined in several ways, for instance a 'stabilizing force that acts to maintain behavioural direction when expectancy conditions are not met and do not function', and 'a psychological state that binds the individual to the organisation' (Meyer and Allen, 1984).

Coopey and Hartley (1991) viewed commitment as an attitude, and posited that commitment is 'a strong desire to remain a member of a particular organization, in other words loyalty to the organisation. According to this definition, commitment refers to an individual's psychological bind to the organization as an effective attachment and identification. Hall, Schneider and Nygren (1970) dealt more with the issues that lead to shared values. They define commitment as 'the process by which goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent'. McEwin, Carmichael, Short and Steel (1998) define commitment as 'readiness to pursue objectives through the individual job in cooperation with others'. Salanick (1977) states that 'commitment is a state in which an individual becomes bound by his actions to beliefs that sustain his activities and his involvement'. However, the most widely used definition of commitment in current research is that of Poters, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). Who developed the organizational commitment questionnaire. They defined commitment as the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation, characterizing it by three psychological factors; desire to remain in an organization, willingness to exert considerable effort on its behalf, and belief in and acceptance of its goals and values. Such characterization fits well with what has known as affective commitment. In support of Porter et al, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) define employee commitment as 'a psychological attachment felt by the employee for the organization'. The Porter instrument and definition has been so widely used by researchers that the Porter's approach 'is the approach to commitment'.

The following definition assist in capturing the essence of the Porter's dimensions: 'a willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organisation and a definite belief in, and acceptance of the values and of the organization (Cooper and Hardly, 1991).

It can be seen that commitment can be viewed and defined in terms of attitude or behaviour. Therefore, it is not surprising that two widely known views of commitment relevant to work organisation have emerged: behavioural or continuance commitment and attitude or affective commitment.
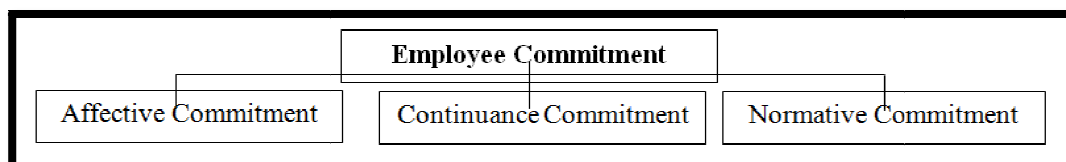

Figure 1: Dimensions of Employees' Commitment
Source: Researcher's Framework, 2020

It had earlier been seen that commitment can be viewed and defined in terms of attitude or behaviour. Therefore, it is not surprising that three widely known views of commitment relevant to work organization have emerged: behavioural or continuance commitment, attitudinal or affective commitment, normative commitment; and taken further the workplace model (Meyer and Allen, 1984). The three-dimensional framework posited the following dimensions based on employee's mind-sets.

- Affective commitment: Is understood as the employees' constructive emotional bonding to the organization. Such employee strongly associates himself with organisational goals and seek to stay with the organisation because he wishes to do so. It provides deeper sense of emotional attachment. This commitment is triggered when employee can relate and agree with the norms of the organisation when compared to their personal norms and value system.
- Continuance commitment: Here the emotional quotient is largely introduced and the employee perceives it to be very costly to lose organizational membership. It involves the need to stay in an organization because of accumulated 'side-bets' and generally lack of alternative employment opportunities (Backer, 1992). Basically side-bets refer to anything of importance that an employee has invested such as time, effort or money that would be lost or devalued at a cost to an employee, if he leaves the organisation (Mayer and Allen, 1984). This suggests that commitment is the outcome of inducements and contribution between an organisation and employee (Morris and Sherman, 1981).
- Normative commitment: In this case, there is an obligatory notion at play. The employee feels to return the value commitment made in him by the organisation. The loyalty aspect is strong either due to individualized value perceptions that direct behaviour or due to social norms that apply to the context and relate with the environment the organization belongs to. It provides a sense of moral obligation and is associated with internationalization of the organization's norms and values, and acceptance of its goal and mission (Iles, Foster and Tinline, 1996).

The fundamental basis of distinguishing between these is that they have very contrasting impacts or implications for behaviour (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). This behaviour in turn has very important implications for the work environment and subsequent performance. Existing literature indicates that affective commitment is strongly associated with only job performance but also with organizational citizenship behaviour and often is a precursor to normative commitment. Continuance commitment is negatively associated with these aspects and usually needs to be moderated in favour of the other two forms of commitment (Marcey and Schneider, 2006). This assertion also suggests that while all three forms of commitment are useful to operationalize, they need to be designed and balanced carefully.

2.2. Organisational Performance

Organisations have important roles to play in our lives and the development of an economy. This is expressed through the production and provision of the needed goods and services for the satisfaction of the citizens and growth of the economy. Therefore, successful organisations represent a major factor for developing nations. Thus, many scholars and economists consider organisations to be similar to the engine that determines the economic, social and political progress of a nation.

For this reason, therefore, continuous performance is the focus of every organisation because, it is only through performance that organisations are able to grow and progress. Thus, organisational performance is one of the most important variables in management studies. Although the concept of organisational performance is very familiar in the academic literature, its definition is difficult because of its various meanings that has been identified from different perspectives. Hence, Lebas (1995) has described performance as future-oriented, designed to reflect particularities of each individual or organisations and based on a casual model linking components and products. He thus explains that a successful organisation is one that will achieve the goals set by the management coalition, not necessarily one that achieves them.

Didier (2002) opined that performance consists of achieving the goals that were given to you in convergence of enterprise orientations. He further explained that performance is not mere finding of an outcome, but rather it is the result of a comparison between the outcome and the objective. Wholey (1996) postulated that performance is not an objective reality, waiting somewhere to be measured and assessed, but a socially constructed reality that exists in people's minds, if it exists somewhere. He added that performance may include: components, products, consequences, impact and can also be linked to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, cost effectiveness and equity.

According to Folan (2007), performance is influenced by the environment, the objective to be achieved, and the relevant and recognisable future. Neely, Adams and Kennerley (2002) opined that performance should consider quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of actions. He further explained that this quantification can be expressed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus, his definition of performance is related to efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Lorino (1997), performance is 'something that a person leaves behind and which exists outside the said purpose'. He further explains performance at the level of each individual within the organisation or of the organisational level. Thus, performance is perceived as an understanding of the achieved results. Bourguignon (1997) explained performance using three senses:

- Performance is success. That is, performance does not exist in itself, it is the representation of the success of businesses or actors.
- Performance is the result of action. That is, performance measurement is understood as an assessment of achieved outcomes, in the course of a process, or activity.
- Performance is action: This explains that performance is a process and not a result that occurs at a particular time.

Bates and Holton (1995) defined performance as the sum of the effects of work, because they provide the strongest relationship with the organisation's strategic objectives, the customer's satisfaction and the economic contributions. He further explains that performance must take into consideration both inputs and outputs. That is, the efforts put in, and the results of the efforts put in. Thus, performance is achieved when all the efforts are focused toward achieving the set objectives and meeting customer satisfaction.

Claudiu (2010) in his opinion defined performance closely related to behaviours and outcomes. This, he explained that performance means both behaviours and results. Behaviours are emanating from the performer and turn the performance of an abstract concept into a concrete action. He further explained that behaviours are not being just tools of obtaining some results, but that behaviours are by themselves outcomes. That is, they are the product of the physical and cerebral exercise submitted for the execution of task and can be judged apart from results.

Therefore, Rolstadas (1998) described organisational performance as a complex relationship involving seven performance criteria that must be followed: effectiveness, efficiency, quality, productivity, quality of work, innovation and profitability. He further explained that performance is closely related to the achievement of the criteria listed above, which can be regarded as performance objectives. Chai (2009) also posited that performance when used in the public sector does not only mean the financial aspects but also those related to reaching the environmental and social equity objectives. This approach of Chai (2009), is also in support of the need for the transition from the system of the 3E (efficiency, effectiveness and economy) to a 5E-type system (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, environment and equity). According to Bartoli and Blatrix (2015), the definition of performance should be achieved through items such as: evaluation, piloting, efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

It could be added that performance during a job can also be measured through the examination of proper implementation processes and procedures. In some cases, however, job performance measurement is easy because performance objectives and goals are clear, while the performance for jobs which the objectives and goals are not clear are difficult to measure. Thus, the concepts of performance are studied through evaluation of overall performance and management of the performance. It is therefore a widely believed that if you cannot measure an employees' performance, then it will also be difficult to manage it. This perception underpins the rational for organisations having a complete and comprehensive performance measurement system such as the balanced scorecard or total quality performance management.

Organisational performance can therefore be both positive or negative, and relates to past results. Hence, it can only be achieved when targeted objectives are reached (Bourguignon, 1997). It is with this view that managers of organisations havebegun to understand that an organisation is successful if it accomplishes its goals using a minimum of its resources.

Barrack, Stewart and Piotrowski (2002) also revealed that the Big Five Personality Traits plays a very significant role in developing employees' commitment and performance, which results in increased organisational output.
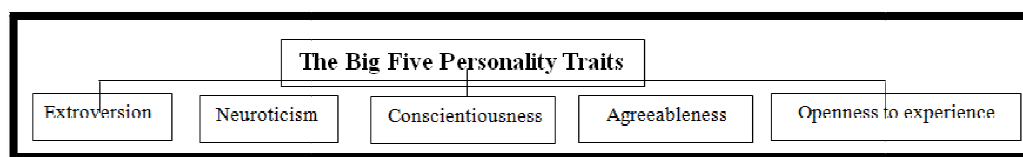

Figure 2: Dimensions of the Big Five Personality Traits
Source: Researcher's Framework, 2020

These Big Five Personality Traits are self-regulating personality factors that describe five major personality dimensions which includes: Extroversion, Neuroticism, conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience as illustrated in the schema above.

2.3. Extroversion

According to Barrick and Mount (2000), an extroverted person is someone that is expressive, outgoing, companionable, gregarious, chatty, confident and determined. They exhibit the tendency to be spontaneous, communicative, energetic, positive and enthusiastic. They are longing for admiration, social acknowledgement, control and command.

Extroverted persons are emotionally firm and sure. That is why they possess contended personality, and this type of personality is the key feature of contended life and job satisfaction. They are capable of practicing affirmative emotions. Thus, when compared with the other personality traits, extroverts are associated with emotional commitment (Erdheim, Wang and Zickar, 2006).

2.4. Neuroticism

This is used to show the variances of individual tendency to experience suffering, and such individual is defined as emotionally insecure and uneven (Judge, Heller and Mount, 2002). They opined that neurotic individual possess traits including; annoyed, stressed, sulky, unsociable, nervous, embarrassed, uncertain, doubtful, unconfident, fearful and dejected. While negative affectivity is linked with neuroticism, they have no belief and faith on others, and have no social expertise to handle the situations that they claim to control. Neurotics also lack confidence and self-image, and experience more adverse feeling in life (Judge et al, 2002).

That is the reason Neurotics are found to be negatively related with job satisfaction and job performance. However, persistence commitment is negatively related to professional performance, and Neurotics are positively aligned with persistence commitment (Barrick and Mount, 1993).

2.5. Conscientiousness

This among the five personality types contain traits like; diligent, attentive, vigilant, comprehensive, responsible, systematised and determined. Thus, highly conscientious individuals are logical, reliable and risk averters. They are always cautions, thorough and focusing on success which is very important for performing work task in organisations (Barrick and Mount, 1993).

This is the reason conscientious individuals are best related with job satisfaction, commitment and job performance. Thus, they are among the best individuals that leads to significant job performance because of their work participation and their characteristics of being able to take the opportunity to get formal and informal rewards (Judge et al., 2002).

2.6. Agreeableness

This personality trait defines the features that is commonly noticed of an agreeable individual such as: self-sacrifice, helpful, nurturance, gentle and emotional support at one end and enmity, indifference to others and self-interest at the other end. An individual with agreeable trait also has the features such as: polite, flexible, naïve, helpful, supportive, merciful, kind and open minded (judge et al., 2002).

These indicates that agreeableness is the most uneasily described or explained personality trait of the Big Five Model of Personality (McCrace and Costa, 1997). It can be further explained that the correlation between agreeableness and job performance is very weak, and likewise the relationship between agreeableness and job satisfaction. Thus, this type of personality trait is significantly related with normative commitment.

2.7. Openness to Experience

This type of the big five personality model is correlated to technical and innovativeness, deviating approach, and political moderation. Generally, openness to experience comprises of being creative, cultivated, curious, open-minded, having a need for diversity, aesthetic and sensitivity. The individuals with this type of personality trait have the propensity to better suite any of the other dimensions (Judge et al., 2002). Further, the individuals with this trait have very optimistic approach for training and learning experiences that are necessary for effective and efficient performance.

With these therefore, the idea that the Big Five Personality Traits have a positive relationship with the commitment and performance in organisations is realistic and supportive. However, to judge and govern the individual's performance in organisations is the most challenging task and problem faced by managers today (Beer and Brooks, 2011).

3. Conclusions

Scholars have argued that commitment, as a behavioural variable should lead to high levels of performance. Commitment is a behavioural construct that can also be shared by employees in the workplace. Commitment has been found to be positively related to performance. Employee commitment is a positive attitude held by employees towards the organization and its values. When employees are properly committed to their work, they increase the occurrence of behaviours that promote efficient and effective performance. These behaviours are individual and discretionary and promote affective commitment. The greater an employee's commitment the tendency for investing extra effort and time, and deliver excellent performance. Committed employees are more likely to staying with current organisation. It is also a fact that highly committed employees are likely to be high performers than merely engaged employees.

It has been found that organisations with high employee commitment excel in customer satisfaction and achieve high performance and operational efficiency; as well as profitability with the additional effect of safer, healthier employees with lower absenteeism and reduced turnover.

Interestingly, commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization among which are enhanced performance and productivity. Human resource practices such as recruitment, training, performance management and workforce survey can provide powerful levers for commitment. Adopting deliberate focus on commitment therefore requires enhancing employee roles by investing in human capital especially development of the knowledge economy. Thus, Armstrong (2003) has posited that social exchange theory assumes that employees tend to act in ways that reflect their organizations or treatment. Therefore, adequate employee commitment has been found to be strong forces towards improving organisational performance.

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