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LEADER ATTUNEMENT: A PRECURSOR TO
EMPLOYEE WORK INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEPOSIT
MONEY BANKS, PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between leader attunement and employee work involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. To accomplish the purpose of this study a cross sectional survey method for social research was adopted, with a self-administered questionnaire as instruments of data collection. The population of the study was 3,978 employees drawn from the ten deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 381 respondents was calculated using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The research instrument was validated through supervisor's vetting and approval, while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient and statistical software SPSS. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that a positive and significant relationship exist between leader attunement and the employee work involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. The study recommends that leader should exhibit attunement skill since there is no better and faster way to build trust than for leader to listen to employee. Consequently. The study posits that management of deposit banks in Port Harcourt should encourage training programmes for leaders. This will enhance their social awareness competence.

Keywords: *Leader Attunement, Employee Involvement, Dedication, Vigor, Trust*

INTRODUCTION

All human interactions are vital form of communication in the business world, and little can be achieved without effective communication between leader and employee. It implies that organization depends on the human resource. This is because all the organizations including deposit money banks were started and run by employees regardless of the kind of activities undertaken. This implies that human resource is a critical factor to an organization Nzuve, (2010). Effective relationship management demands proper handling of the feelings, thoughts and emotions of employee in order to involve them in the formulation and implementations of organizational policies that affect them. Leader of organization such as the deposit money banks recognized the fact that their effectiveness in handling employee is highly determined by the quality of their relationship. Consequently, for leaders of deposit money banks and other organizations to achieve the basic organizational goals and objectives, attunement skill has to be exhibited by way of listening to employee that contribute to the bottom line of the bank. This leadership skill is what distinguishes the most tactful leader in an organization Goleman, (2006). Attunement is a very powerful tool that every leader must have. This is the ability of leader to be sensitive to the need of workers. Therefore, human resource in deposit money banks determines the success of the banks. This was also buttressed by Cole (2002), that people are the greatest single asset available to an enterprise, and the same people have the capacity to work against that organizational goals. It is therefore, only by collaborative efforts that people can find a release for their latent energy and creativity in the service of the organization. This achievable through employee work involvement

Watson, (1980) affirmed that dynamic business environment requires diverse strategic approaches be adopted in order to understand and manage employees effectively. Traditionally, employees have had either no say or an indirect say in the formulation and implementation of organizational policies. Therefore, in attempt to boost organizational efficiency, employee work involvement has become of great academic concern in the leadership literature (Lawler, 2010). Employee involvement is all about creating an enabling environment in which employees have impact on actions and decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, the quest to achieve and exceed the target of the banks due to strong competition have created so much problems in the system, to the extent that leader no longer have listening ears to employees. The quest to achieve branch target has caused the leader to turn deaf ears and allocate unrealizable targets to the workers, without having feelings for them on how to achieve their targets. This unfortunate event has triggered the workers to exhibit unholy behavior to the detriment of their personal lives. And so much emotional and psychological trauma such as high blood pressure, high turnover, broken marriages. The quest to achieve the unrealizable targets, has pushed most of the ladies into prostitution. Sequel to the problems associated with some of the banks, there is need for every the leader to have attunement skill for effective relationship management. An enhanced employee work involvement by way of creating the enabling environment improves team performance, low absenteeism and turnover rate in the system. This suggests that leader attunement skills plays a pivotal role in employee work involvement. In line with the desire to contribute to the body of knowledge, this study seeks to

examine the relationship between leader attunement and employee work Involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt.

The objectives were to:

1. Examine the relationship between leader attunement and dedication in deposit money banks
2. Examine the relationship between leader attunement and trust in deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.
3. Examine the relationship between leader attunement and vigor in deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of relationship between attunement and dedication in the deposit money banks, Port Harcourt?
2. What is the extent of relationship between attunement and vigor in the deposit money banks, Port Harcourt?
3. What is the extent of relationship between attunement and trust in the deposit money banks, Port Harcourt?

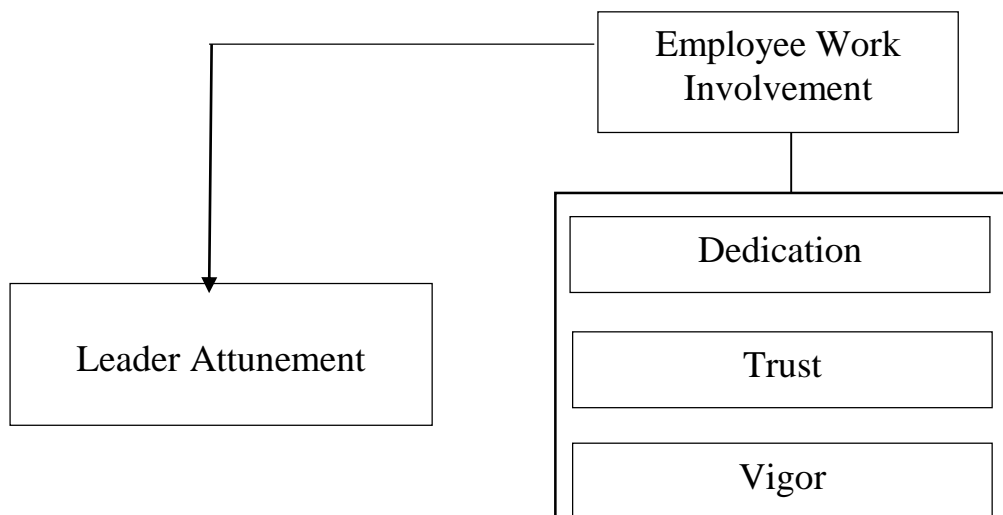


Figure 1: Researcher's Conceptualized framework

Source: Desk research, 2018

LITERATURE REVIEW

The approach to the study was based on the social exchange theory. It explains how employees feel about relationship that is dependent on principle of equity and fairness. Horman (1958), posited that every employee cherishes relationships that are based on love, respect, and trust for one another. He further argued that the employees wanted relationships that was of great benefit to them. Every employee prefer leader that listens carefully and intently, while they discuss about what is on their minds. Therefore, it is crystal clear that relationships between employees and their leaders are based on cost-benefit analysis. Jones (1976), also noted that employees seek to develop friendships and romantic relationship that give them positive reward. However, the concept of social exchange theory in this context is based on give and take relationship. A leader that exhibits good behaviour such as love and caring for employees encourages employee work involvement in terms of their dedication, trust and Vigor. The theory is also based on employee sense of mutual benefits rather than coercion. Searle (1995), emphasized that empowering employees in the formulation and implementation of policies encourages their involvement. This implies that the ability of the leader to show concern by listening very attentively to their problems enhances employee work involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt,

Attunement

Attunement has been described as the ability of leader to listen attentively and think about how others feel. This behavior competence of a leader facilitates good rapport between the leaders and employees of an organization such as deposit money banks. Listening builds trust and there is no better and faster way to build trust between leader and employee than for one to be attentive to then. This true in all human relationships. It is unfortunate that leaders in most of the organizations find it difficult to listen to employees. Consequently, this bad behavior of not paying good attention to workers has caused so much damages in organizations. Employees like and trust leaders that listen carefully and intently to them. Leaders that are effective listen twice as much as they talk. This is because the trust bond between the leader and the employees is the foundation for a successful relationship. Importantly, leader skill to give special attention to employees was found to distinguish effective leaders in the deposit money banks. Full listening tended to maximize psychological synchrony, so that emotions align. And leader that intentionally give more attention to employees in the deposit money banks encourages employee work involvement.

Employee Work Involvement

Employee work involvement has been described as work structures and processes that allow employees to give their input in decisions that affect their work in a systematic way. It is the process of creating the enabling environment that empowers employees to participate in the formulation and implementation of organizational policies that affect their lives. Lawler & Kejner (1965), described employee work involvement as "the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work". This implies that employee that exhibits high level of work involvement is more likely to be productive than one that is not. This behavior should be

encouraged in organizations because of its beneficial tendencies. Employee work involvement encourages efficient and innovative environment in an organization, improves communication between leaders and followers, promotes employee job satisfaction, reduces staff turnover. Goldthorpe (1968) posited that employees exert mental and physical energy in human activities called work, because they want to make a living. Besides, Ahiauzu (1999), posited that in traditional African society, work was categorized as jobs, occupations, skills and professions, because work activities were for subsistence. Work therefore exists in operations concerning peoples earning of daily bread, and in this regard it is synonymous with business, occupation and employment which can be said to be activities undertaken in return for payment, they argued. Davis (1981), also posited that the concept of work has five features. An increase in employee work involvement is also associated with increase on employees' trust, dedication and vigor in deposit money banks. He further adduced that employee work involvement is a participative management process, that determines the level to which employees share information, knowledge in the organization. This was substantiated by the fact that when employees are involved in the day to day decision making process, they tended to have some levels of authority in making decisions that were not previously within their power. Therefore, organizations such as the deposit money banks where employees are empowered in decision making process strive to achieve organizational goals.

Darlington (1969), was of the opinion that historical changes are partly described by regulations governing breeding, which encourages genetic mixtures, keep certain social groups apart, prevent part of the populations from breeding. However, changes within the last 4,000 years ago were much more the result of cultural development, that was the sudden and gradual accumulation of new patterns of social behavior introduced by innovations diffused through a social group, and taught to children. As a matter of fact evolution proceeds by selecting those species with the greatest survival value. However, cultural development operates by selecting those ways of life which are dictated to be most satisfactory, biologically and otherwise. He further stressed that learning from the culture has become important as a direct result of the evolutionary developments of the larger brain, speech and the elongated period of childhood dependence.

Measures of Employee Work Involvement

Dedication

Dedication is a reflection of persistence, consistency and continuity. It is an expression of the employee's involvement to set of work-related values and beliefs. Flaherty & Pappas (2000), posited that there is a significant relationship between employee trust in the organization and satisfaction as well as dedication. This implies that enhancement of trust in organization relative to their inclusion in decision making is significantly related to employee motivation. It is important to state here that high level of employee work involvement is achievable in an environment of shared sense of destiny and purpose. The ability of the leader in deposit money banks to create the enabling environment for employee involvement for the formulation and implementation of policies encourages employee dedication in the deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.

Vigor

Vigor as a measure of employee work involvement has been described as employee work situations, characterized by high levels of mental and physical energy exertion as well as resilience on the job. It is a reflection of the tempo and high powered drive demonstrated through the exertion of energy, time spent, and concentration on the job or with activities related to the organization. Vigor has been described as the pace and focus which employee experiences on the job as a result of increase in morale, motivation. Besides, vigor is regarded as the opposite of exhaustion and burnout, given occasion of physical work demands, workplace pressure and other related factors.

Trust

Trust in workplace is been described as the willingness of parties to accept risk and allow themselves to be vulnerable to significant others Mayer et al (1995). Trust in the behavior of other people grows when actions are observed to be consistent with the expected characteristics which reflect skill, reputation and personality. The further stated that trust declines most often when positive expectations are disconfirmed by actual experience. This implies that trust comes to play when it is believed that a partner's word of promise is reliable. Singh et al (2005) posited that trust is the level to which each party in a relationship relies on the integrity of the promise offered by other party.

Relationship between Attunement and Employee Work Involvement

Leader attunement is regarded as one of the most powerful competences that is often misunderstood and underutilized. This leadership skill is regarded as consideration of employees' feelings and willingness to respond promptly to their needs without necessarily carrying a burden. The ability of the leader to pay adequate attention to employees stimulates good communication, increase loyalty, trust and employee dedication to work. Employees prefer and trust leaders that listen carefully and intently. Trust bond between the leader and employee is the real foundation for effective relationship management that encourages cooperation between leader and employee. As a matter of fact, trust is everything, especially in a complex environment. The higher the level of trust between leader and employee, the lower his or her fear of failure, and the higher their dedication. With respect to the first research objective on the relationship between attunement and employee work involvement, the study found that leader that possessed the attunement skill created the enabling environment for employee work involvement in the deposit money banks.

Goleman and Boyatzis (1995), authenticated this position by affirming that attunement competence of the leader is the fundamental power of social consciousness, social efficiency in daily work. Attunement competence of the leader has been described as a total transformation of employee beliefs into sincere appreciation that encourages decisions process. They further revealed that the leader that have the skills to listen very well were regarded as better performers. In fact, one of the main characteristics of attunement skill in leadership literature is that it enhances and prolongs the emotional impact of the leader. However, the attunement ability of the leader determines the efficiency with which they identify, manage the feelings of those they relate with. Under the leader that pay adequate attention, employees enjoy common level of work involvement. Albrecht, (2006), was of the opinion that the attunement skill of the leader is an important factor

that is required to negotiate and collaborate with employees, in order to achieve the desired goal of the organization such as deposit money banks. Tannenbaum et al., (1973), further stated that an increase in employee work involvement as a result of the attunement skill of the leader is associated with increase in employee dedication, trust and vigor,

The foregoing we hypothesized thus:

Ho₁ : There is no significant relationship between leader attunement and dedication in deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.

Ho₂ : There is no significant relationship between leader attunement and vigor in deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.

Ho₃ : There is no significant relationship between leader attunement and trust in deposit money banks, Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method in evaluating the relationship between attunement and employee work involvement of the deposit money banks, Port Harcourt. The accessible population of the study was 3,978 employees of 10 deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. A sample size of (381) was calculated using the Taro Yemen's formula for sample size determination. They were selected using the simple random sampling method from the selected deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. Descriptive statistics were used for data presentation and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for hypotheses testing with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

In this approach the secondary data analysis was carried out by the use of Spearman Rank Order Correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. However, the tests for hypotheses Ho₁, Ho₂ and Ho₃ were all bivariate and stated as the null. Consequently, the 0.05 significance level was adopted as criterion for the probability of either to reject or accept the null hypothesis at $p < 0.05$ or accept at $p > 0.05$ respectively.

Table 1 Correlation Result for leader Attunement and Employee Work Involvement

		Leader Attunement	Dedication	Vigor	Trust	
Spearman's rho	Leader Attunement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.885**	1.000**	.957**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	371	371	371	371
	Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.885**	1.000	.885**	.979**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	371	371	371	371
	Vigor	Correlation Coefficient	1.000**	.885**	1.000	.957**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	371	371	371	371
	Trust	Correlation Coefficient	.957**	.979**	.957**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	371	371	371	371

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: SPSS 20.0 research data output, 2019.

The results in table 1, indicates that there is a significant and positive association between Leader attunement, and dedication, vigor and trust. Attunement is significantly and positively correlated to dedication in deposit money banks in Port Harcourt ($r = 0.885$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$). Also, attunement is significantly and positively correlated with vigor in deposit money banks in Port Harcourt ($r = 1.000$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$). Similarly, attunement is also significantly and positively associated with trust in deposit money banks in Port Harcourt ($r = 0.542$, $p = 0.00 < 0.01$). The association between attunement and the measures of employee work involvement is found as significant and positive at the level of 0.01 significance. Sequel to the above, the study concludes that the hypotheses deduced the existence of a significant and positive association between attunement and the measures of employee work involvement in terms dedication, vigor and trust of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. Based on the results illustrated above, the previous bivariate null hypothetical statements are hereby rejected, as the evidence from the analysis reveals that leader attunement is significantly and positively associated with the three measures of employee work involvement.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods examined the relationship between leader attunement and employee work involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. However, the findings revealed a strong and positive significant relationship between leader attunement and employee work involvement using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient at a 95% confidence interval. Therefore, the findings of this study confirmed that leader attunement has a positive impact on employee work involvement in terms of dedication,

vigor and trust. This position was authenticated by Goleman (2006), that the ability of the leader to listen attentively to employees and think about their welfares is a key factor. However, the result of the Spearman's rank order correlation reveals that there exists significance and positive association between leader attunement and employee dedication. This position was also buttressed by Horman, (1958), that most social relationships are based on love, respect and trust. Therefore, effective relationship management skills of leader should be encouraged because it enhances employee work involvement. Consequently, leaders of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt exhibited high level of attunement competence which ultimately prompted employee involvement in the formulation and implementation of organizational policies. Besides, leader attunement competence was found to have significant relationship with employee work involvement in terms of dedication, trust and vigor. This was based on the fact that attunement skill of the leader was a critical factor to effective relationship management in banks.

Therefore, the study affirms from the findings that:

- i. Leader attunement is positively correlated with employee work involvement in terms of dedication, trust and vigor.
- ii. Attunement competence of the leader promotes bonding and trust, and this was a key factor to employee work involvement in deposit money banks.
- iii. Leader attunement skill encourages environment of good rapport, creativity and innovation. It was found that this uncommon leadership skill distinguishes a good leader from bad leader.
- iv. Leader attunement competence was found to be a strong precursor to effective relationship management in deposit money banks Port Harcourt.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that leader attunement is a strong precursor to employee work involvement. This implies that leader attunement is positively and significantly associated with employee work involvement in the deposit money banks Port Harcourt. The study also concludes that effective relationship management competence of leader enhances employee work involvement in terms of dedication, trust and vigor. Social awareness skill of leader encourages employee work involvement of the deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. This position was corroborated by Goleman (2006), that majority of employees prefer leader that listen and care than the amount they earn as salary. The study recommends that leader of organizations including deposit money banks should put in place effective relationship management strategies inform of orientation, training, and development. Besides, the leader should always create the enabling environment that will encourage employee involvement in the formulation and implementation of organizational policies that affects them.

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