

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP ON THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF POWER HOLDING COMPANY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

A literature based paper; this paper has conceptualized a simple model consisting of two variables, namely psychological ownership and employee organizational citizenship behaviors relationship. Because previous studies have only concentrated on countries in the West, United State and Asia, this paper is an attempt to shift outward the frontier of knowledge concerning the relationship between psychological ownership and employee organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) by exploring a different context namely Nigeria. A survey study of cross-sectional nature will be conducted in Kano Distribution Company of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc. The PHCN, as a major element in Nigeria's power sector, is currently experiencing a major reform to enhance its service delivery and quality. Contextual performance in the form of organizational citizenship behaviors promotes the effectiveness of the organization. Because of its positive relationship with organizational effectiveness, this paper proposes that experiencing psychological ownership may increase the performance of OCBs among employees of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria. Efficient and effective operations of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc are essential for growth and development of all sectors of the Nigeria's economy.

Keywords: Psychological Ownership, Organization Citizenship Behaviors, Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc.

1. INTRODUCTION

All organizational members have some tasks and responsibilities the organization expects them to perform. Actually, tasks can be divided into two, namely tasks that are described in the job description (in-role), and tasks that are outside of the formal job description (extra-role) but are necessary for organizational survival and effectiveness. That extra-role responsibility by organizational member has been popularized as organizational citizenship behavior. Identified as "good soldier syndrome" by Organ (1988), organizational citizenship behavior represents the willingness of individuals to invest effort and energy in their organizations beyond any formal requirement and without expecting formal rewards (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). However, Organ (1988) argues that OCB might have a beneficial

cumulative effect for an individual employee and that the employee might be considering the long-term benefits. Organizational citizenship behavior has been argued to include, among other things, helping behaviors, volunteering, and altruism towards individuals, groups, or organization, obedience and loyalty. The field of OCB has become an interesting social behavior field of research. In the past three decades the field of OCB has received considerable attention in management studies and other fields such as sociology, psychology, political science, management and labor studies (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006).

Some examples of employee OCB include helping fellow workers who have difficulty in performing their work; exhibiting endurance and perseverance in performing jobs; avoiding doing things or saying things that tarnish the image of the organization; spending extra time to achieve objectives; when they perform their job beyond requirements; and generally when they show extra concern about success of their organizations (Organ, 1988). Employee OCB may benefit organizations directly or indirectly. Direct organizational benefits include volunteerism, assistance between co-workers, and unusual employee attendance to an important meeting, employee's punctuality and active participation in organizational affairs (Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990). Indirect benefits, as Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) stress, include lubricating the social machinery of the organization. Also Katz (1964) considered such discretionary behavior essential for strong organizational social systems. He posited that the organization gains a measure of systemic resiliency from the small, spontaneous acts of selfless sensitivity, cooperation, and uncompensated contribution.

Different researches have established that OCB could contribute to organizational performance in many ways. Podsakoff, Ahearne and MacKenzie (1997) argue that OCB has potential to enhance organizational performance through lubricating the social machinery of the organization, reducing friction, and increasing efficiency. OCB may also contribute to organizational success by enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, promoting better use of scarce resources, improving coordination, strengthening the organization's ability to attract and retain better employees, reducing variability of performance, and enabling better adaptation to environmental changes (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). Research demonstrates that OCB can be an important resource to improve organizational performance in complex work environments demanding team oriented work practices (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Since OCB has been empirically found to promote the efficient and effective functioning of organizations (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 1997) continuous study of this organizational aspect is still warranted.

OCB Literature has indicated that a good number of antecedents have been found to influence OCB. Among the OCB antecedents indicated in the literature is psychological ownership (Vandewalle, Van Dyne & Kostova, 1995). Furthermore, Van dyne and Pierce (2004) empirically indicated that psychological ownership has increased variance in organization-based self-esteem and organizational citizenship behavior in both the peer and supervisor ratings, over and above the effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, more recently and unexpectedly, Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble and Gardner (2007) have empirically found no positive relationship between two

forms of psychological ownership (i.e., job-based and organization-based) and extra-role behavior (OCB). Hence, since the major studies concerning relationship between psychological ownership and OCB have revealed inconsistent results and considering that study about the duo relationship is still new, more studies are needed to clarify the actual relationship between the two major constructs. This paper is an attempt to propose a replicated model to clarify the actual relationship between psychological ownership and OCB in a new context other than the West or USA. Hence, this study proposes to test the relationship between psychological ownership and OCB, which still remain inconclusive, in Nigeria's electric power sector.

2. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) has widely been used to underpin OCB by most researchers (Cohen & Kol, 2004; Jawahar & Carr, 2007; Skarlicki & Latham, 1997; Zoghbi-Manrique de Lara, 2008). The fundamental basis of social exchange theory is that relationships providing more benefits than costs will yield enduring mutual trust and attraction (Blau, 1964). These social transactions encompass both material benefits (i.e. salaries, bonuses, and allowances) and psychological rewards (i.e. status, loyalty and approval; Yukl, 1994). Central to both social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity is the concept of unspecified obligations. Unspecified obligations denote human behavior that when one individual party does a favor to another, there exists an expectation of some future return from the other individual party. These obligations maybe enacted in the form of citizenship behaviors and over time, a pattern of reciprocity evolves, resulting in perceived balance in the exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Rousseau, 1989). Citizenship behaviors are more likely to be under an individual's control, and hence more likely to be a salient mode of reciprocation (Organ, 1990).

Exchange relationships with the organization and with one's immediate supervisor are of great significance to subordinate employees (Jawahar & Carr, 2007). Based on the previously mentioned theorem of unspecified obligations which is central to both the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, employees' exchange relationship with the organization is influenced greatly by unspecified obligations. A good mechanism for this unspecified obligation is psychological ownership for the organization. Specifically, with respect to employees' exchange relationship with the organization, perceptions of unspecified obligations could develop through the feeling of ownership for the organization (psychological ownership for the organization) by the employees. Therefore, employee OCB can be as a result of satisfaction with some organizational practices and consequent experience of ownership for the organization by the employees. This paper will investigate the relationship between the psychological ownership for the organization and the employee OCB.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Psychological Ownership and Employee OCB

Psychological ownership is a state where an individual feels as if the target of ownership or a piece of that target is his/hers (Pierce, Kostova & Dirks, 2001). Specifically, psychological ownership of organization represents a bonding such that organizational members feel a sense of possessiveness

toward the organization even though no legal claim exists (Vandewalle et al., 1995). Feelings of ownership for organization are accompanied by a felt responsibility and a sense of burden sharing for the organization (Druskat & Kubzansky, 1995; Kubzansky & Druskat, 1993). It was found that every feeling of ownership for organization is related to commensurate or balancing responsibility for work outputs (Dipboye, 1977; Mackin, 1996), thus suggesting that with psychological ownership every positive employee behavior is a possibility. Feelings of responsibility include a responsibility to invest one's time and energy to advance the cause of the organization, caring and nurturing important aspects of the organization (Pierce et al., 2001).

Pierce et al. theorize that formal ownership may produce positive attitudinal and behavioral effects through psychologically experienced ownership. In a similar pattern, Kubzansky and Druskat (1993) suggest that the psychological sense of ownership may be an integral part of the employee's relationship with the organization. Furthermore, it has been found that psychological ownership, as an attitudinal state, becomes attached to issues that organizational members feel worthy of attentional investment (Pratt & Dutton, 2000). Brown (1989) demonstrates that psychological ownership is a key to organization competitiveness, thus suggesting strong influence of psychological ownership on corporate mission and goals of organizations.

A few studies about psychological ownership and OCB revealed significant relationship. A high level of psychological ownership is accompanied by positive employee behaviors such as feeling of concern for product quality, customer satisfaction and working as a part of a team, as opposed to the feeling that these job-related issues are someone else's concern or problem (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Therefore, when employees feel a sense of ownership for their organization or any part there from, they can exert extra efforts and personal sacrifices to ensure the organizational interests are protected and goals achieved. Because psychological ownership is affective, it can be a good catalyst for employees to engage in positive employee behavior such as OCB. In line with this, Van dyne and Pierce (2004) reported existence of positive links between psychological ownership for the organization, OCB, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and organization-based self-esteem. Similarly, Vandewalle et al. (1995) have demonstrated that psychological ownership significantly and strongly predicts extra role behavior more than does the in-role behavior. Additionally, comparison revealed that psychological ownership has demonstrated superiority over job satisfaction in predicting extra role.

Psychological ownership theory has proposed that employees who feel and act like owners of the organization will assume responsibility, accountability and personal risk, toward their actions and decisions affecting their organizations (Pierce et al., 2002). This sense of ownership is believed to bring an impact to the success of an organization through actions such as employee organizational citizenship behavior.

Based on the discussed theoretical and empirical literature on the consequences of psychological ownership and consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) that suggests employees will

perform favorable behaviors when they experience favorable gestures from their organization, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- **Hypothesis 4 (a):** Experiencing psychological ownership by employees is positively related to organizational citizen behaviors for individual employees.
- **Hypothesis 4 (b):** Experiencing psychological ownership by employees is positively related to organizational citizen behaviors for the organization.

4. CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

Nigeria accounts for one-fifth of the population of the African continent and it is ascertained to be very critical to Africa's business and development (Eneh, 2009). However, Nigeria remains inefficient and grossly underdeveloped. Akinlo (2008), therefore, observed that Nigeria cannot develop with high level of inefficiency experienced in the country. To develop the country, there is need to improve efficiency and reduce waste in the public sector as well as to strengthen the private sector as its engine of development (Akinlo, 2008; Wolde-Rufael, 2009). It is widely accepted that growth and development of Nigeria can only be achieved with an efficient power sector because the sector affects every aspect of the economy (Okoro, Govender & Chikuni, 2006).

Although the electric power sector is one of the most important sectors to support the infrastructural development of Nigeria, electricity generation and distribution remain underdeveloped and in short supply. Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), a national monopoly organization responsible for electric power generation, transmission and distribution has continued to deteriorate for the past 2 decades despite the huge Nigeria's endowment in natural resources that could facilitate electricity production (Barros, Ibiwoye & Managi, 2011). Among the endowed natural resources that are believed to be highly underutilized, of which some constitute good sources of power generation, include huge gas reserve, coal, solar and hydro resources (Barros et al., 2011). Power generation in Nigeria is mainly from thermal plants, which contribute about 60%, and hydro power plants which generate about 30% (Tallapragada, 2009).

Some of the problems that hamper the effectiveness of PHCN include lack of adequate funding and managerial strategies resulting in the steady decline of the company (Adoghe, 2008). Providing support to this claim, (Barros et al., 2011) stated that when investments are made in the sector, huge part of the investments were undertaken in the area of power generation without a corresponding investment in the transmission and distribution networks, thus making a little or no difference in improving power supply. Associated problems of poor funding include lack of timely routine maintenance. Related to this problem, Ikeme and Ebohon (2005) argued that more than two decades of misguided planning and underinvestment had left a vast supply deficit with no new infrastructure. Consequently, the power sector was at the edge of total collapse with average daily generation of 1,750MW in 1999. The situation did not change after 10 years of civil rule, as the available capacity output was still less than 2.5GW, thus various measures taken in the past to tackle problems of the generation and distribution of the electricity have failed to work (Barros et al., 2011).

Lack of effective functioning of the Nigeria's power sector manifested by epileptic power supply has led to some undesirable economic and social consequences. Some of the negative consequences include business closures and consequent rise in the rate of unemployment (Okereke, 2010). Additionally, Subair and Oke (2008) lamented that supply capacity of the Nigeria's electric power has largely fallen behind demand of the country, and that the shortage often results in equipments malfunctioning. Other negative consequences of lack of effective functioning of the Nigeria's power sector include illegitimate activities such as illegal connections on the national grid, overbilling and under billing, and vandalization of equipments which are then resold, in most cases, to private electricity equipment vendors (Subair & Oke, 2008).

Against this background, the Nigerian government has decided to embark on a reform that is meant to decentralize operations in the power sector. It has been reported that the reform is to solve a myriad of problems, including inadequate power generation capacity, inefficient usage of capacity, limited access to infrastructure, ineffective regulation, low connection rates, lack of capital for investment, insufficient transmission and distribution facilities, high technical losses and vandalism (Adenikinju, 2003). The primary structure affected by this reform was the Nigeria's electric power company, which was the organization that enjoyed monopoly of electric generation, transmission and distribution in Nigeria. This company has experienced change of name three times. The names include Electricity Corporation of Nigeria (ECN) from 1951-1972, National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) from 1972-2005 and presently Power Holding Company of Nigeria Plc (PHCN) which begins in 2005. The recent change of name is part of the on-going reform.

In sum, this reform aims to achieve the least-cost electricity generation and constant increase in electricity production. Therefore, the Nigerian government restructured the power sector by unbundling NEPA into 18 separate companies composed of 6 electricity-generating companies, 1 Transmission Company and 11 distribution companies. The power sector reform has been designed to encourage private participation by breaking NEPA's monopoly to pave way for private investment called Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

As generally expected with some forms of change, this reform has met with stern resistance from the staff and executives of the PHCN (Okereke, 2010). Therefore, the success of this reform and ultimate improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of Nigeria's power sector will largely be dependent on positive employee outcome. Against this background, this paper is concerned with making a meaningful contribution for the realization of the success of the present power sector reform from organizational management perspective. This paper proposes a conceptual model comprising of two significant variables, namely psychological ownership as the independent variable and employee citizenship behavior (OCB) as the dependent variable. Experiencing ownership for the organization among employees of this important organization is capable of positively affecting their morale, attitude and behavior toward the organization. Specifically, the feeling that they own the organization can push them

into activities that their formal jobs did not require them to perform (i.e., OCB). It has been well established in the literature that OCB influences effective functioning of organizations, and also leads to efficient allocation of resources (Organ, 1990). The proposed model which will empirically be tested using the employees of the present Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc is aimed at providing viable strategy for solving the lingering problems of the Nigeria's electric power sector, and thus serve as a positive stimulus for improved performance of the sector.

5. METHOD

5.1. Sample

A sample of 322 lower and middle level employees of Kano PHCN Distribution Companies will be used to obtain the needed data for this study. Cluster sampling will be used to distribute questionnaires to the respondents. Participants will be personally contacted and be requested to anonymously complete a two-page questionnaire that consists of 21 items excluding demographic variables. The researcher and two employed assistants will collect back the completed questionnaires at intervals of time.

5.2. Measures

5.2.1. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Organizational citizenship behavior will be measured using the Williams and Anderson's (1991) instrument that consists of 14 items. Internal scale reliabilities of .96 and .74 have been reported for OCB-I and OCB-O respectively (Kim, O'Neill & Cho, 2010). Example of a sample item is 'I help others who have heavy workloads and I assist supervisor with his/her work (when not asked)'.

5.2.2. Psychological ownership

Developing feelings of ownership for a variety of objects, material and immaterial in nature, psychological ownership will be measured using Van Dyne and Pierce's (2004) measurement. The internal scale reliability of .83 has been reported for the psychological ownership instrument (Chi & Han, 2008). Example of a sample item from psychological ownership measurement is 'I sense that this is MY Company and I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization'.

6. CONCLUSION

Primarily, this conceptual paper is an attempt to clarify the relationship between psychological ownership and OCB by proposing the study in a new context (Nigeria). Literature established that psychological ownership states that under certain conditions, individual organizational members can develop feelings of ownership toward the organization and various organizational factors. This paper proposes that experiencing the feeling of ownership for their organization, employees may volunteer to assist co-workers in different ways, protect their organization from disrepute and generally engage in voluntary positive behaviors that on the overall can contribute to the effective functioning of their organization. In addition to clarifying the inconsistent findings regarding psychological ownership and OCB, this paper may provide a good opportunity for testing the constructs' relationship in a different and rather virgin contextual framework.

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