
Employee Commitment in Organization

Chioma Nwokoro

Econa Consultancy and Research Center
Woji, Port Harcourt Rivers State
Email: chivivian08@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Employees' commitment is an integral concept in the study of organizational behavior as indicated by the myriad studies conducted relative to this subject. Its importance lies on its effect on the overall efficiency of the organizations. This paper discusses the importance of organizational commitment. Moreover, it provides an overview of the factors that could affect the level of commitment of workers to their organizations and suggested the relevance of improving commitment of workers through the principle of employee motivations.

Keywords: *Employees Commitment, Organizational commitment, Employee Motivation, Employee performance*

INTRODUCTION

Employee commitment is generally defined as the extent of an individual's dedication or devotion to an organization to which he/she is affiliated (Williams 2003). Meyer and Allen (2001) posited that organizational commitment describes the employee's relationships with the organization which has significant implications with regard to his/her decision to continue being a member of a particular organization. There are three common classifications of employee or organizational commitment recognized by researchers in general, namely: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Affective commitment pertains to employees' view of their emotional attachment to the organization (Williams 2003). It describes the level of commitment in terms of employees' identification with the organizational goals and their desire to stay with their companies.

On the other hand, Continuance commitment refers to the employees' perceived loss or entailed cost of leaving the organizations (Williams 2003). With this type of commitment, employee may choose to remain with the company since he/she believes that substantial effort or great deal of time has already been invested in the company (ibid).

Normative commitment is associated with the employees' desire to remain in the organization because of their belief that it is their obligation to do so. This is exhibited when, for example, an individual prefers to stay with the company because of the perception that he/she is indebted to the company because of some favor or benefit extended by the company (Williams 2003).

IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEES COMMITMENT IN WORK PLACE

Studying employees commitment is an important undertaking since the concept is deemed to be directly related to the strength or stability of a company's workforce (Williams 2003). Commitment is perceived as instrumental in determining the performance of workers. A company comprising of committed employees is likely to reap benefits due to good performance of workers and reduction in turnover and absenteeism (Abrahamsson 2002). Its importance stems

from its relationship with these work-related outcomes, i.e. performance, absenteeism and turnover among others (Cho & Kwon 2005).

However, various studies have mixed findings with regard to the relationship of work related outcomes to organizational commitment. For instance, Abrahamsson (2002) observed that some studies show that there is no evidence of a systematic relationship between organizational commitment and those work-related outcomes. On the contrary, other studies like that of Meyer and Allen (2001) support the idea that a committed person stays with the organization whatever prevailing conditions are and accomplishes tasks which may even be beyond what is expected.

Furthermore, an employee who is committed, shares company's goals and beliefs as well as protects the company's assets and interest (Abrahamsson 2002). Such differences may result from the fact that commitment is such a broad term subject to different interpretations. But when one comes to think of it, it is evident that a person who is committed or dedicated to a specific cause can be observed to work hard. In addition, a committed individual is determined to work towards the attainment of the purpose or goal to which he/she is dedicated.

FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

In order to foster employees' commitment to their companies, there are numerous research undertakings which tackle the determinants of organizational commitment or the factors that substantially influence people's decision to stick with or leave organizations. In a study conducted by Meyer and Allen (1991), as cited by Abrahamsson (2002), organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment, is developed by factors such as job challenge, degree of autonomy, variety of skills used, participation in decision-making, fairness of policy and treatment, personal fulfillment and personal competence among others. They also noted that personal characteristics including gender, age, marital status and level of education do not substantially contribute to the development of affective commitment (Abrahamsson 2002). The findings of the research undertaken by Lingard and Lin (2004) are in line with the factors enumerated above. The study, which examined the relationship between career, family and work environment variables on women's organizational commitment, showed that satisfaction with career progression, job involvement, supervisory support and perception of organizational diversity were correlated with the organizational commitment of respondents composed of women in construction industry in Australia (Ibid).

There are still other factors affecting organizational commitment. For the purpose of this paper, factors namely professional tenure, leadership behavior, organizational values and employee motivation are highlighted. These factors are summarized as follows:

Career stage and professional tenure

Studies conducted about the influence of career stage on work attitudes mostly concluded that work attitudes, specifically organizational commitment, increased as an individual's career advanced. However, in these studies these commitments are said to differ relative to the career stage. This means that some studies considered the age of workers while others the specific career stage. For instance, Van der Velde et al., (2003) posited that workers who were in the initial stage felt relatively less committed to the organization as compared to those in their middle and final career stages. The authors went on to declare that workers in the last stage of their career may be more committed than at the earlier stages of their career life.

Moreover, Van der Velde et al (2003) using a large sample size comprised of both men and women in high-level jobs in the same organization got a different result. They found that professional tenure has a negative effect on organizational commitment. They explained this using the current trend of workers moving through different jobs or organizations for career advancement purposes. This means that presently, workers may consider it impractical or imprudent to stay in the same job and/or organization for a lengthy period of time.

Leadership behavior

There is a relationship between the types of organizational commitment and styles of leadership. The style of leadership in this perspective is relations-oriented leadership and task-oriented leadership. To differentiate, relations-oriented leadership involves leadership practice that focus on building trust, inspiring a shared vision, encouraging creativity, emphasizing development and recognizing accomplishments. On the other hand, task-oriented leadership entails leadership practices that focus on ignoring problems or waiting for problems to become serious before taking action (Brown 2003). Brown (2003) suggests that task-oriented leadership explains some of the variation in the affective commitment of employees in place of work. This is especially as this leadership style does not encourage support or shared experiences that employee-boss could tap into to work out differences in the place of work. Gradually this leadership style breaks down affective commitment and trust. The same is observed between normative commitment and the said leadership style. Meyer and Allen (1991) posited that these findings are not at all surprising considering that many of the work experiences similarly affect affective commitment and normative commitment. Given the same study, Brown (2003) also found out that neither styles of leadership affect continuance commitment due to the absence of correlation. Continuance commitment is observed to be affected by other factors such as transferability of skills, education, retirement money, status, job security and availability of alternative employment opportunities.

Another study conducted by Humphreys et al. (2003) examined the relationship between the behavior of leaders, commitment of subordinates and both their emotional and practical intelligence. Findings of this study show that those employees deemed to be highly committed rated their leaders as relatively more transformational compared to their less committed counterparts. According to the proponents of this study, the conclusion suggests that the relationship between the attributes of leaders and follower outcomes might not be as unidirectional as often described by previous studies conducted.

The same subject has been studied by Avolio et al. (2004). The study they conducted focused on psychological empowerment and structural distance as components of transformational leadership. Consistent with the above findings and previous studies, they concluded that there is indeed a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational leadership. However, they noted that the relationship between transformational leadership at the direct immediate level was only diffidently related to the level of commitment and empowerment of the subordinates. They explained that this may be attributed to the possibility that close followers or direct subordinates are more likely to witness the inconsistencies in their leader's behavior. This may have substantial effect on the feeling of empowerment and commitment towards the organization. In this regard, they observed that transformational leadership at the indirect senior level had a greater degree of positive relationship with employees' level of commitment.

In the same study, they also found out that, given their sample population comprising of hospital nurses, differences in the level of organizational commitment of employees may be

partly explained by the differences in their feeling or perception of how empowered they are relative to working with their more senior and indirect supervisor.

Organizational values

Organizational commitment is also said to be affected by the employees' perception of organizational values. This is an important finding of the study conducted by Finegan (2000) which explored the relationship between personal or organizational values and organizational commitment where the participants comprising of employees of a large petrochemical company were asked to rate indicated values and their importance to the organizations as well as complete commitment scale. From the study, the employee showed a high level of nonchalance to the organizational values. This nonchalance resulted from sloshed and weak rules as well as un-organized principles, corruption and depravity in management. The commitment scale filled by majority of the employees showed negligence of organizational principles and some level of outlaw in the employees' behaviors. Finegan had to believe that organizational values without support from good leadership and strong organizational principles (organizational policies maintained appropriately) eventually result in outlaw behavior amongst staff. This study highlights the essence of recognizing the importance of values and how they affect work behavior (Finegan, 2000).

Employee motivation

The job of a manager in the workplace is to get things done through employees. To do this the manager should be able to motivate employees. Motivation practices are difficult subjects, touching on several disciplines. In spite of enormous research, basic as well as applied, the subject of motivation is not clearly understood and more often than not *poorly practiced*. To understand motivation one must understand human nature itself. Human nature can be very simple, yet very complex too. An understanding and appreciation of this is a prerequisite to effective employee motivation in the workplace as well as good management and leadership.

There are studies on motivation theory and practice that concentrate on various theories regarding human nature in general and motivation in particular. Included are studies on the practical aspects of motivation in the workplace and the research that has been undertaken in this field, notably by Douglas McGregor (theory y), Frederick Herzberg (two factor motivation hygiene theory,) Abraham Maslow (theory z, hierarchy of needs), Elton Mayo (Hawthorne Experiments) Chris Argyris Rensis Likert and David McClelland (achievement motivation) (Finegan, 2000). Most importantly is the idea that motivation initiate good level of commitment at work and lack of it is a disaster. Motivation related to Commitment at work explains how employee's compensations and other work related remunerations may generate feelings of commitment or lack of it in work place. Inclusive, is the work environment and employee and team relations and work practices which may affect motivation and commitments of an employee to work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION IN IMPROVING EMPLOYEE COMMITMENTS

Quite apart from the benefit and moral value of an altruistic approach to treating colleagues as human beings and respecting human dignity in all its forms, research and observations show that well motivated employees are more productive and creative.

Motivation is the key to performance improvement

There is an old saying you can take a horse to the water but you cannot force it to drink; it will drink only if it's thirsty - so with people. They will do what they want to do or otherwise motivated to do. Whether it is to excel on the workshop floor or in the 'ivory tower' they must be motivated or driven to it, either by themselves or through external stimulus (Finegan 2000). Are they born with the self-motivation or drive? Yes and no. If no, they can be motivated, for motivation is a skill which can and must be learnt. This is essential for any business to survive and succeed. Performance is considered to be a function of ability and motivation, thus, **Job performance =f (ability)+(motivation).**

Ability in turn depends on education, experience and training and its improvement is a slow and long process. On the other hand motivation can be improved quickly. There are many options and an uninitiated manager may not even know where to start. According to Finegan (2000), there are seven strategies for motivation.

- Positive reinforcement / high expectations
- Effective discipline and punishment
- Treating people fairly
- Satisfying employees needs
- Setting work related goals
- Restructuring jobs
- Base rewards on job performance

These are the basic strategies, though it may vary from workplace situation to situation. According to Finegan (2000), essentially, there is a gap between an individual's actual state and some desired state and the manager tries to reduce this gap. Motivation is, in effect, a means to reduce and manipulate this gap. It is inducing others in a specific way towards goals specifically stated by the motivator. Naturally, these goals as also the motivation system must conform to the corporate policy of the organization. The motivational system must be tailored to the situation and to the organization.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge of employee commitment in an organization is a pre-requisite for any organizational growth. In this paper three types of organizational commitment were mentioned – affective, normative and continuity commitment. These types commitment are considered to be function of the employee response to the Four factors in the paper were perceived as determinants of the level of commitments by employees in an organization, they are:-

- i. Career Stage and Professional Tenure as a factor is an understanding that employees' commitments are simultaneous with their levels and ranks in the organization. It is proposed that at a higher ranking level in their professional career, employees are believed to have a higher level of commitment to the organization. This because they have a higher level
- ii. Leadership behaviour in the context is perceived to be a factor of the type of leadership style adopted by the organization. There is the relations-oriented leadership which involves building trust, inspiring a shared vision, encouraging creativity, emphasizing development and recognizing accomplishments. On the other hand, task-oriented leadership involves ignoring problems or waiting for problems to

- become serious before taking action. Also the normative and affective leadership types were discussed in a study carried out by Brown (2003) which showed that neither affective nor normative leadership styles affect continuance commitment. Continuance commitment is observed to be affected by other factors such as transferability of skills, education, retirement money, status, job security and availability of alternative employment opportunities.
- iii. The third factor considered the importance of maintaining a standard value in an organization and the essence of managers in ensuring that principles of an organization are maintained effectively by example. The proponents of this factor believe that where there are weak values there will high risk of outlaw in behavior of employees. This behavior in turn causes un-productivity and decadence in the organization.
 - iv. The fourth factor addressed the issue of employee motivation and why it is necessary for employees to be motivated. Motivation is envisaged as the pre-requisite for employees performance in an organization. Performance is considered to be a function of ability and motivation. Ability in turn depends on education, experience and training and its improvement is a slow and long process. On the other hand motivation can be improved quickly through technical strategies and processes, which managers are expected to adopt in their managerial procedures.

Finally, employee commitment is a factor of managerial procedures of any organization. It is the duty of managers to ensure that the factors mentioned above are made relevant in their managerial procedures and executions. These procedures must also conform with the organizational policies for growth and continuity to be ensured.

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