Perceived Leadership Communication Predicting Dimensions of Organizational Commitment among International and Local Airline Service Employees (KLM and AERO) in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates Perceived Leadership Communication (PLC) as a predictor of organizational commitment and as correlate of the sub-factors of organizational commitment. PLC is a new area in leadership communication and its relationship to organizational commitment has not yet been studied. 300 local and international airline employees from a sample of AERO and KLM airline service employees in Lagos were surveyed. Data were collected using Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) and Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS). Linear regression analysis was run to predict Organizational Commitment from Perceived Leadership Communication of the airline employees. Results show that Perceived Leadership Communication predicted Organizational Commitment F (1,298) = 152.03, R= 0.581, R2 =.336 (β = -.501, t = -11.987, P<.05) and accounts for 33.6% of the total variation in organizational commitment. Other hypothesis were analyzed, reported and discussed in line with existing literature. It is concluded that level of Organizational Commitment is high when Perceived Leadership Communication is high also. KLM employees were found to experience higher organizational commitment than AERO employees.

Key Words: Leadership, Perceived Leadership Communication, Organizational Commitment, Airline Employees.

Introduction

Background to the Study and Literature Review

Leader communication has continued to remain a critical factor in superior worker motivation and performance (Robbins, 2001), and has invariably remained characteristic for great potential to aid organizations in the quest for committed employees. Leadership as a concept refers to the ability to lead, direct and organize a group. An individual impacts a gathering of people to accomplish a shared objective (Abasilim, 2014; Northouse, 2004). Leadership is seen as a dynamic process at work in a group whereby one individual over a particular period of time, and in a particular organisational context influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the achievement of group tasks or goals (Cole, 2002). Leadership communication is therefore the soul of everyday organizational activities, enabling the leader to effectively lead, direct and organize a group. Leader communication is the bridge that transmits behavioral intent to employees, thus creating the foundation for trust (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2002). The implication

of this understanding to management is far reaching; it should therefore be a catalyst to concern and invariably, studies surrounding management communication and employee commitment. Verbal transactions such as receiving instructions from a supervisor, meeting an executive in order to get feedback for job performance, or discussing problems with a superior are examples of some typical communicative behaviors of organizational members in subordinate positions pursuing their everyday tasks (Schneider, Maier, Lovrekovic & Retzbach, 2015).

The airline industry is positioned in the heart of global economic recovery and sustainable development. Catering to everyone who is charged with engaging world enterprises in financial and economic advancement, the airline industry therefore poses to be a leading force in global and local service provision. Airline industries in Nigeria particularly require a massive intervention in terms of structures, operational characteristics systems, and facilities to further maintain the growth in the industry. This is because most of the facilities at the airports that majorly serve the purpose of improving airline services are in dire need of adequate global practice management (Adeniyi and Bolarinwa, 2011). In order to upgrade services in the airline industry in the country the air navigation services and tools will require both globally acceptable technology and committed employees and managers to bring it out of the current doldrums. According to Adeniyi and Bolarinwa (2011) the currently utilized metrological equipment ought to be upgraded to impose competent airline services in the country. This transformation in the airline industry ought to cover every aspect, particularly the manpower facet, leaving out none at all; this will enable and ascertain that full competence in the industry is achieved. Adeniyi and Bolarinwa (2011) also opine that there should be an overturning in all the institutions managing the Nigerian aviation industry for the most desirable airline services and the development of the Nigerian aviation industry. As part of efforts to see to a better airline transportation service, the leadership communication principles are being identified as key to success in this area and conceivably, to all service provision based organizations and employee based organizations in general.

Perceived leadership communication is a new area in the numerous studies and research on leadership. Positive employee relationship with their leaders is a facilitator to employee satisfaction and invariably, commitment. The leader is an anchor for the employee. Schneider et al. (2015) posit that organizational members with leadership responsibility have to provide their employees with work-relevant information, give them feedback about how they have done their jobs, and show them consideration in order to establish a good work relationship with their subordinates. An employee's general success is invariably centered on leadership interaction and communication with him/her. Annual appraisals are not sufficient for an employee's success, especially in the aviation industry; interaction should therefore be as constant as is needed for the employee to remain engaged while needed success skills are acquired adequately and continuously.

Barnard (1938) opines that "the first function of an executive is to develop and maintain a system of communication" (p. 226, in Schneider et al., 2015). Maintaining continuity in this system of communication is a definite requirement for employee effectiveness. Johlke & Duhan (2001) revealed that high-quality communication, such as clear, more accurate communication, better informed employees and more avenues for employees to communicate with management and co-workers, was positively related to job commitment. Vuuren de Jong, & Seydel (2007) invariably opine that open communication was positively related to organizational commitment among employees. Organizational commitment of employees has been acknowledged as playing a major function in the functional and effective output of an organization. This is because a highly committed employee may embrace the goals and values of the organization and have a strong aspiration to belong to the organization, take ownership of the organization, as well as being willing to go the extra mile for the organization in the performance of duties. This in turn becomes quite reflective in the effort of providing excellent service for clients in the airline or general service provision sector. In recent years, organizational behavioral statistics have shown that an increasing number of employees do not stay with their employers. Even when they stay, the desire to leave the organization reflects in their work attitude and their general mannerism towards the customers they serve.

Organizational commitment is therefore an integral aspect of organizational success in any goal directed employee based organization. This study focuses on perceived leadership communication as a predictor of organizational commitment in the service provision sector, particularly the airline industry, which has been identified to be in the heart of economic recovery, growth and sustainable development particularly of Nigeria as a nation.

According to Hamdi and Rajablu (2012), Organizational Commitment is a major concept in organizational research and also in the understanding of employee behavior in the workplace. Literature shows evidently that one variable that is explicitly and implicitly studied in terms of significance of leadership activity is organizational commitment. Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979) defined commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organization. Organizational commitment as a concept is one that typically manifests based on other surrounding concepts and is generally considered from a variety of factors such as supervisor-subordinate relationship (Brunetto, Farr-Wharton and Shacklock, 2011; Hamdi and Rajablu, 2012) leadership communication and style among others . According to Allen and Meyer (1990) organizational commitment can be noticed in increased job performance, low job performance, employee turnover, lower absenteeism, increased organizational citizenship behavior and so on. Organizational commitment is the extent to which employees are dedicated to their employing organization and willing to work on its behalf, and the likelihood that they will maintain membership (Jex, 2002). It represents both the feelings and the behavioural tendencies that employees have towards the organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1983). The three bases of organizational commitment are affective, continuance, and normative (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The affective component of organizational commitment refers to the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement of the employee in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that the employee associates with leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The normative component refers to the employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In addition to having multiple bases, employee commitment may be focused at different levels within the organization and may be directed to outside groups (Jex, 2002).

Research focusing on commitment, shows that the term commitment is broadly used to refer to previous circumstances and resultant cost, as well as to the process of becoming committed or attached or to the state of commitment or attachment itself (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) also noted that commitment is a psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization, which would reflect the degree to which the individual internalize or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization. The apparent lack of agreement on a single definition of the term has contributed greatly to its being regarded as a multidimensional construct (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Even if multiple dimensions or forms of commitment exist, there is supposed to be a core existence that characterizes it (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) opine that the various definitions that exist all point to a force that directs a person's behavior. There appears to be a compromise in definition, that the force is experienced as a mindset (i.e. a frame of mind or psychological state) (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Commitment is seen as force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets; employees are likely to experience this force in the form of the three mindsets earlier identified: affective, normative, and continuance, which reflect emotional ties, perceived obligation, and perceived sunk costs in relation to a target, respectively (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) also posit that commitments include 'behavioral terms' that describe what actions a commitment implies. In their argument, Meyer and Herscovitch explain that these terms can take the form of focal and discretionary behavior, where a focal behavior is one believed to be integral to the concept of commitment to a particular target, such that all three mind sets should predict this behavior.

According to Meyer and Herscovitch, "focal behavior is one to which an individual is bound by his or her commitment; for example, for organizational commitment, the focal behavior is theorized to be maintaining membership in the organization".

In distinction, Meyer and Herscovitch explain discretionary behaviors as those that are "optional, in the sense that the employee has some flexibility in defining the behavioral terms of his commitment". Meyer and Herscovitch argue that different behavioral terms should be included in item wording, depending on the kind of behavior the researcher is trying to predict. In the same vein, Meyer et al. (2006) point out that commitment has both cognitive and affective elements. The cognitive elements are the behavioral terms and the basis of the commitment, and the affective element comprises whatever feelings a specific mindset invokes (Meyer et al., 2006).

Findings from the study of Allen (1992) on employee perceptions regarding the top management employee communication relationship show that "the quality of top management's communication, and superior subordinate communication were strongly related to organizational commitment". Data analyzed from Carrière and Bourque (2009)'s study showed that internal communication practices explained 49.8 per cent of the variation in communication satisfaction, 23.4 per cent of the variation in job satisfaction, and 17.5 per cent of the variation in affective organizational commitment. Putti, Aryee and Phua (1990) in a study examining the relationship between communication relationship satisfaction (CRS) and organizational commitment concluded that top management relationships relate more closely to organizational commitment than either the global CRS or supervisor relationship.

Statement of the Problem

The presentation so far indicates an apparent gap in empirical effort directed towards the review on leadership communication and the relationship between perceived leadership communication and organizational commitment. It has been noted to a large extent, that most leadership theories pay little attention to communication, and communication scholars have not systematically explored the prerequisites of effective leadership (Cohen, 2004, p. 177, in Schneider et al, 2015). In the present research location there is also a definite dearth in the study on the relationship between perceived leadership communication and organizational commitment in general and particularly in the service provision sector. Understanding the role of perceived leadership communication in the service provision industry is needful as the service provision sector and particularly the airlines industry play a significant role in boosting the economy of the third world. Of particular interest therefore are the factors that lead to organizational commitment within the industry. Such organizational behaviour is hinged on the hypotheses that perceived leadership communication will induce some productive behaviour from the employees. Organizational commitment deserves attention, as it is noted to give completive advantage to organizations in this era of global competition (Sutanto, 1999). Customer satisfaction performance is the ultimate goal for every organization and the managers of such organizations. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine how organizational commitment as a productive behaviour is predicted by perceived leadership communication in the airline service provision industry. This purpose has thereby given rise to the following hypothesis.

Hypotheses

1   Perceived leadership communication will predict organizational commitment among a sample of airline employees.

2   There will be a significant correlation between Perceived Leadership Communication and the dimensions of organizational commitment, affective, normative and continuance commitment

3   There will be a significant difference in the organizational commitment of international and local airline service employees.

Method

Research Design

The study utilized a survey research design, adopting an ex-post factor design involving administration of questionnaire in which perceived leadership communication serve as independent variables, while organizational commitment was the dependent or criterion variable.

Participants

The population involved in this study constitutes the employees of Aeroland (AERO) and KLM Airline Companies in Lagos state, Nigeria. Lagos is the commercial capital of Nigeria. Being a formal capital, it has retained relevance as an economic and financial hub as well, hence the decision to focus this research on Lagos. AERO is a Lagos, Nigerian based air travel agency founded in 1997. It is locally administrated and run for local travel needs within Nigeria only. KLM on the other hand is an international focused flag carrier airline of the Netherlands with service offices in Lagos, Nigeria among many. This airline however flies passengers across the globe. There are several international and local airlines in Lagos. These two airlines were selected by a random technique to be included in the study.

A sample size of 300 employees were selected from the population through an incidental random selection process from both companies.350 questionnaires were returned from both organization but only 300 were complete and usable. These comprised two hundred and ten from Aeroland, ninety from KLM. 182 were males and 118 were females. The age range is between eighteen (18) to fifty one (51) years.

Sampling Technique

A two-stage sampling technique was adopted for collection of data. This comprised the simple random sampling and convenient sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used to select two airlines out of the many local and international airlines which have headquarters in Lagos; one local and one international airline from available airlines serving in Nigeria with headquarters in Lagos. Convenient sampling was subsequently used to administer questionnaires to participants.

Instruments

I. Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ-OR)

The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ-OR) is a short, reliable, and valid instrument for measuring leadership communication from both perspectives of the leader and the follower. The development and validation of a one-dimensional 6-item scale in four studies (total N = 604) is described by Schneider et al. (2015). Results from 2 studies show internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion validity of the PLCQ's other-rating version (PLCQ-OR)-a version for measuring how followers perceive the communication of their leaders. Cronbach's α, which covers for reliability and internal consistency, had an average of .80 over the studies. All confirmatory factor analyses yielded good to excellent model fit indices. Convergent validity was established by average positive correlations of .69 with sub dimensions of transformational leadership and leader-member exchange scales. Furthermore, non-significant correlations with socially desirable responding indicated discriminated validity. Last, criterion validity was supported by a moderately positive correlation with job satisfaction (r = .31).

Uzonwanne (2017) carried out a revalidation process on the Perceived Leadership Communication tool using a Nigerian sample. Internal consistency, factor loading results range from.84 to -.97; Composite reliability results show (0.96) and AVE validity results show (.89). Discriminant validity indicate that a

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December 2017

Vol. 6 Issue.4

moderate positive relationship exists between perceived leadership communication and dimensions of organizational commitment; affective (r=.42, p<.05), continuance (r=.46, p<.05) and normative commitment (r=.42, p<.05) (Uzonwanne, 2017).

II. Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) Allen and Meyer (1991)

This instrument (OCS) was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Its purpose is to measure organizational commitment. It contains 24 items and it is designed to assess the extent to which a worker is affectively attached to achievement of goals in the organization, may want to leave the organization or the emotional feelings of remaining in the organization. The scale was measured on a five point likert-type that is from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. It ranges from 0.74 to 0.83. the scale has three dimensional construct namely; affective commitment, 1-8 with coefficient alphas of 74-87, continuance commitment, no 9-16 with alpha of 73-81 and normative commitment, no 17-24 with alpha of 67-78. According to Karim and Noor (2006), an exploratory factor analysis using Maximum Likelihood analysis as the method for extracting factors was performed to determine whether the data collected on Allen & Meyers's Organizational Commitment scale would exhibit both convergent and discriminant validity. The results showed that two factors were extracted with eigenvalues of more than one (1), therefore the two sub-scales, Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) can be said to be psychometrically stable and have exhibited both convergent and discriminant validity. Studies have shown affective and continuance commitment to be indeed constructs that are distinguishable from one another (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS version 22. Multiple regression analysis was run to predict Organizational Commitment from Perceived Leadership Communication, while Pearson r was run to check for correlation between Perceived Leadership Communication and the dimensions of organizational commitment, affective, normative and continuance commitment. A t-Test for independent samples was also run to determine differences in the mean scores of organizational commitment between international and local airline service employees.

Results

Three hypotheses were formulated and tested based on a review of the theoretical basis of the study and related literature.

Hypothesis One

Perceived leadership communication will predict organizational commitment among a sample of airline employees.

This hypothesis was tested using linear regression statistics. The result is presented in Table 2:

Table 2: A summary of linear regression showing perceived leadership communication as a predictor of organizational commitment.

Model	SS	df	Mean Sq	F	P value	R	R^2	Adj R^2
Regression	40422.76	1	4042 2.76	152.03	.000	.581	.338	.336
Residual	79232.36	298	265.88					
Total	119655.1	299						

Linear Regression coefficients

Predictor	B	SE.B	β	t	P
(Constant)	108.493	1.678		64.641	.000
PLC	-1.140	.092	-.581	-12.330	.000
[F(1, 298) = 152.03, p<0.05, R= 0.581, R^2 =.338]					

The result in Table 1 shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.581 which is a good level of prediction on the dependent variable. The adjusted R square (0.336), shows that perceived leadership communication accounts for 33.6% of the total variation in organizational commitment. The table also reveals that analysis of variance of the linear regression data produced a statistically significant F-ratio value (F(1,298) = 152.03, P<05 = .000). The result indicates that perceived leadership communication predicts organizational commitment hence the hypothesis is therefore supported.

Hypothesis Two

There will be a significant correlation between Perceived Leadership Communication and the dimensions of organizational commitment, affective, normative and continuance commitment
The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson r and the result presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Table for Perceived Leadership Communication and dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Variables	N	R	P
Perceived Leadership Communication			
Affective Commitment	300	-.665	<.05
Normative Commitment	300	-.479	<.05
Continuance Commitment	300	-.473	<.05

There were 300 respondents who are airline service providers from KLM and AERO airlines and their perceived leadership communication scores were tested to determine a statistically significant relationship with the dimensions of organizational commitment; Affective, Normative and Continuance commitment. Results show a sig two-tailed value of p = .000 for Affective Commitment, p = .000 for Normative Commitment and p = .000 for Continuance commitment. Since .000, .000 and .000 are all less than 0.05, it was determined that there is a statistically significant correlation between the perceived leadership communication of the airline service employees and the dimensions of organizational commitment; Affective, Normative and Continuance commitment that they manifest. This result means that increase or decrease of perceived leadership communication will significantly relate to increase or decrease of the dimensions of organizational commitment; Affective, Normative and Continuance commitment and vice - versa. The hypothesis was therefore supported.

Hypothesis Three

There will be a significant difference in the organizational commitment of international and local airline service employees. The hypothesis was tested using the t-Test for independent samples and the result presented in Table 4.

Table 4: t-Test Table for Organizational Commitment of AERO and KLM employees

AIRLINE	N	X	SD	t	P
KLM	90	98.21	23.03		
AERO	210	88.42	17.83	3.978	<.05

There were 90 KLM respondents and 210 AERO respondents tested for this hypothesis, while their mean Organizational Commitment score was 98.21 and 88.42 respectively. The *t*-Test scores showed that two-tailed p value associated with this test was .000. The *t*-Test reveals a statistically reliable difference between the mean of the Organizational Commitment scores that the KLM respondents has (M = 98.21, SD = 23.03) and that which the AERO respondents has (M = 88.42, SD = 17.83), t (298) = 3.978, p = .000, α = .05. It can therefore be concluded that the KLM service employees' organizational commitment levels are significantly higher than that of the AERO service employees surveyed. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Discussion

The analysis of the results show that perceived leadership communication predicts organizational commitment among a sample of airline service employees from two prominent airlines in the industry, based in Nigeria. The finding reveals that 33.6% of the variation in organizational commitment can be accounted for by the perceived leadership communication of the service employees while the balance of 66.4% is attributable to other factors. The findings also report strong correlations between perceived leadership communication and the dimensions of organizational commitment, Affective (p = .000), Normative (p = .000), Continuance (p = .000). The implication is that when perceived leadership communication increases, organizational commitment and all its components will most likely increase also. While this is so, further analysis in the study also show that the organizational commitment of the KLM employees was significantly higher than that of the AERO employees, while the perceived leadership communication of the AERO employees showed to be significantly higher than that of the KLM employees.

Even though perceived leadership communication as a construct is a new area, the findings from organizational commitment in relationship with manager employee communication are mostly consistent with existing literature. Findings from the study of Allen (1992) on employee perceptions regarding the top management-employee communication relationship show that "the quality of top management's communication, and superior-subordinate communication were strongly related to organizational commitment". Data analyzed from Carrière and Bourque (2009)'s study showed that internal communication practices explained 49.8 per cent of the variation in communication satisfaction, 23.4 per cent of the variation in job satisfaction, and 17.5 per cent of the variation in affective organizational commitment. In addition, Putti, Aryee and Phua (1990) in a study examining the relationship between communication relationship satisfaction (CRS) and organizational commitment concluded that top management relationships relate more closely to organizational commitment than either the global CRS or supervisor relationship.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study focused on perceived leadership communication as a predictor of organizational commitment among a sample of airline service provider employees. The general finding was that perceived leadership communication significantly predicted organizational commitment among the target population sample, up to 33.6%. Perceived leadership communication also correlated strongly with the dimensions of organizational commitment, Affective, Continuance and Normative. In particular, as perceived leadership communication increased, organizational commitment with all its dimensions also increased. Results also showed that the international airline service employees' organizational commitment levels are significantly higher than that of the local airline service employees surveyed. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that as confirmed by previous investigations, leader communication to subordinates as perceived by the led, is an important predictor of organizational commitment. There is a need for organizations in Nigeria generally and service providing organizations specifically, to pay adequate attention to issues of manager and leadership communication as it affects their employee's organizational commitment level.

It is recommended therefore, that organizations and related service providing establishments should give due attention to the findings of the present study by exploring ways to ensure a more dynamic relationship within the communication dyads present and organizational commitment among their employees. Service providing organizations should in particular; evolve organizational policies aimed at reviewing leader performance indices to include the way subordinates perceive communication between them and their leaders. Primary focus on sponsored research should be an aspect of organizational financial planning; research focused on organizational commitment level of the work force in relation to perceived leadership communication as covered in this study and other identified variables that are involved in increasing and maintaining health organizational commitment levels. Researchers interested in the study of psychological outcomes associated with leadership behavior should consider organizational commitment as an important criterion. Future investigations should consider focusing research in other types of organizations line front line production companies and also in other parts of Nigeria not covered by the present study.

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