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Ethical Leadership and Work Engagement in Wood Carving Cottage Industry in Annang Community of Nigeria

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Abstract:
Recently there has been a dearth in the number of people that embrace the traditional craft of wood carving business in Annang community. Though number of thing could have accounted for dearth in the business but unethical practices in the leading and managing of businesses may not be rule out of this. The challenge where leaders fail to regard the leadership of ethics in a business is also critical. This introduces the further problem of leaders struggling to win the trust of their followers because their integrity is constantly being questioned. This study which is descriptive in nature and made use of purposive and accidental sampling techniques is set out to investigate the impact of ethical leadership on work engagement in wood carving business among the Annang people. To satisfy the objective of this study two hypotheses were formulated. Four-point Likert scale questionnaire and interview schedule were used to gather data for this study from two hundred respondents in four Annang communities. And data collected was analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient. The analyses revealed that the calculated R-value of 0.68 and 0.48 were higher than the critical R-value of .195 at 0.5 level of significance with 198 degrees of freedom respective; this showed that leadership trust and integrity influence work engagement. The study recommended that leadership quality should be improve through promotion of open information sharing and practical guidelines that would endear a fair attitude towards relating with the workers.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, trust, integrity, wood carving

1. Introduction

Wood carving business in Annang community in Nigeria was a prominent business that not only provided means of survival for the people in that area but has brought the area to limelight because of their peculiar nature of carving and their products. Over the years this business has struggled, the trend appears to be dying as many people seem not to show concern and engage in the unique culture and business of wood carving in Annang. The dearth in apprenticeship may not be unconnected to the style of leadership in the wood carving industry. Ethical leadership exhumes trust that may encourage workers to fully and willingly engage in work. A factor that appears to propel productivity towards survival of businesses which seems to be lacking in the wood carving business in Annang community is work engagement. Work engagement has recently gained impetus as a legitimate discourse among academic scholars, (Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2014). This is because some scholars see work engagement as a factor that impacts on employee outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (Saks, 2006, Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, and Prussia, 2011)). According to Gruman and Saks (2011), work engagement is the key to an organization's success and competitiveness. The more employees are committed to their work the more efficient and productive they are. Amos, Gardielle, and Mahembe (2017) argue that because employees are more likely to engage in their work if they are drawn upon themselves to perform their roles, trust on the part of management is essential. So, it takes an ethical leader to extract the potential of dedication, love and eagerness to work from the employees. The credibility of ethical leaders is likely to have a significant influence on trust between a leader and follower (Eisenbeiss and Giessber, 2012). The moral principles of Integrity and trust form the basic feature of an ethical leader. These two salient values define an ethical leader and may direct and dictate how an employee approach tasks. Since work engagement is essential for the success of an enterprise, the major objective of this study is to determine the impact of ethical leadership on work engagement in wood carving industry in Annang community in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The major objective was achieved through the provision of answers to the following research questions:

To what extent does leadership trust affect work engagement?

Does leadership integrity have any effect on work engagement?

2. Literature Review

Ethical leadership has been a prominent area of interest to scholars, this is because of the strong impact leadership has on determining the course of action in organizations. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005, p.120) defined ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making". According to Amos et al (2017) this definition relates to the "moral person" facet of ethical leadership that exhumes value integrity, trustworthy, caring, honest, and fair. These in turn translates into the ability of an ethical leader to make fair and principled decisions, act as a role model and recognize and reward the good conduct of the employees. Mayer, Aquino, Kuenzi, and Greenbaum (2012) consider the moral manager facet as most unique to the ethical leadership construct.

Ethical leadership seems to enhance work engagement because it builds organizational trust and workers are likely to engage more in their work when there is trust on management. Gardielle (2013) sees Ethical leadership as an important element in the organization because of the impact leaders may have on the conduct of employees and ultimately on organizational performance. For him ethical leadership therefore is likely to have a significant influence on trust between leader and follower. And because ethical leadership has an immense influence on different organizational functions, the effect on work engagement cannot be ignored. Work engagement is a "a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, and Bakker, 2010). According to Schaufeli et al (2010) in Strom, Sears, and Kelly (2013) vigor is characterized by high levels of energy, mental resilience while working, persistence when faced with difficulties, and a willingness to invest effort in one's work; dedication refers to a sense of inspiration, pride, significance, enthusiasm, and challenge at work. While absorption is being happy, fully concentrated, and deeply engrossed in one's work, with trouble detaching from work.

Scholars have tried to make argument associating ethical leadership to work engagement. For example, the studies of Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, (2006), Schaufeli, Taris, & Van Rhenen (2008) and Halbesleben (2010) have discovered that work engagement leadership in the organization. Eisenbeiß and Giessber (2012) found that a large number of studies on ethical leadership deal with the influence ethical leaders have on their followers' behaviours and attitudes. Gardielle (2013) stated researcher have confirmed positive relationships, as evident in recent studies, exist between ethical leadership and employee satisfaction; employee willingness to make an extra effort; employee motivation; trust; and subordinate optimism. Furthermore, Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) indicated that ethical leadership has a positive influence on employee work engagement. This is supported by Gardielle (2013) whose empirical study discovered that the relationship between ethical leaders and followers is so important in an organization, and that trust and leadership are key aspects that should be considered especially since they can contribute to employee work engagement.

Trust seems to be essential in eliciting work engagement from workers. When workers build trust on leaders, strong confidence appears to be developed and the works may go all the way to impress on the work. Dadhich and Bhal (2008) discovered that trust is predicted by ethical leadership. Brown et al. (2005) found that ethical leadership is significantly related to the level of trust the follower has in the leader. In addition, Johnson, Shelton and Yates (2012) reported a positive relationship between ethical leadership and organizational trust. The study of Wong, Spence-Laschinger and Cummings (2010) confirmed that trust has a positive effect on work engagement. They stated that trust involves the free exchange of knowledge, ideas and information which will lead employees to engage in their work.

Integrity is another element of ethical leadership that could influence work engagement. Yukl (2013) defines integrity as honesty and consistency between a person's espoused values and behaviour. According to Amos et al. (2017), integrity offers a very logical reason to trust someone. And the feeling of fairness or moral character will provide a sort of predictability that can help individuals cope with uncertainty. So, they conclude that a leader with integrity will therefore be perceived as trustworthy, which will lead to trust in that leader and work harder. Weiner (2000) using intrapersonal motivation theory maintains that people try to understand themselves and their environment and act on the basis of this knowledge. The environment includes the nature of leadership and the general package for employment. The theory contends that when workers perceive and realize that the leadership in the organization is ethical in dealing with them, they will be more willing to work and take their tasks seriously. The views of scholars examined have tried to relate ethical leadership to work engagement; this study therefore is set out to determine whether there exists any relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement.

Based on the literature reviewed the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:
- Leadership trust significantly affects work engagement.
- Leadership integrity significantly effects work engagement.

2.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in Annang Communities in Ikot Ekpene. Ikot Ekpene, is a historic town in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, and is in the densely populated state of Akwa Ibom. It is the political and cultural capital of the Annang ethnic group in Nigeria. Ikot Ekpene is located in the south eastern part of Nigeria; and is known as a regional centre of commerce, with notable exports of palm products, especially palm oil, kernels, raffia products including raffia fibers and its sweet wine, as well as ground crops of yams, cassava, taro, and corn. The population is made up primarily of the Annang people who are Christians with a small number of Igbo traders and Hausa Suya Vendors. There is high presence of wood carving cottage industry as the

people chiefly engage in basket weaving, sculpture, and, most notably, wood carved door, and raffia cane furniture. Three institutions of higher learning have added richness to the town: the Ikot Osurua College of Technology, the School of Nursing and the St Joseph Major Theological Seminary.

3. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. This research design was preferred because it allowed the researcher to ascertain and establish the status quo, facts or pieces of information at the time of the research. The data for this study was gathered through a point Likert scale questionnaire and interview. The study made use of purposive and accidental sample technique. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the four communities predominantly involved in wood carving namely: Mbiasu, Ikot Abia Idem, Ibiakpan, and Abiakpo. While the accidental sampling technique was used to select fifty respondence from each of the four Annang communities. A total of two hundred respondents were selected for the study. The data was analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows that 194 representing 97% of the total respondents were male; while 6 representing 3% were female. The implication of this to the study is that the wood carvers are mainly men, women rarely involve in the business.

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	194	97
Female	06	3
Total	200	100

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Table 2 shows that out of 200 respondents considered for this study, 85 of them representing 42.3 per cent had put in 1 to 10 years in the wood carving business. Sixty eighty respondents representing 34 per cent have put in 11 to 20 years, while 47 respondents constituting 23.5 per cent had been in the business for 21 and above. The implication of this to the study is that the respondents have long experience to be able to give useful information on the issue under study.

Work Experience	No of Respondents	Percentage
1-10	85	42.5
11-20	68	34
21 & above	47	23.5
total	200	100

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Work Experience

4.1. Test of Hypotheses

4.1.1. Hypothesis 1
- H_1 Leadership trust significantly affects work engagement
- H_0 Leadership trust do not significantly affect work engagement.

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	R
Leadership trust	$\sum y$ 3186	$\sum y^2$ 50384		
			74911	0.68
Work engagement	4651	104213		

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Leadership Trust and Work Engagement (N = 200)
Significant at .05, critical r = .195; df = 198.0

Table 3 reveals that the calculated R-value of 0.68 is higher than the critical R-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore means that, there is a significant relationship between leadership trust and work engagement.

4.1.2. Hypothesis 2

- H_1 Leadership integrity significantly affects work engagement.
- H_0 Leadership integrity do not significantly affect work engagement.

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	R
Integrity	$\sum y$ 1647	$\sum y^2$ 7285	34857	0.48*
Work engagement	1536	4978		

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Integrity and Work Engagement (N = 200)
Significant at .05, Critical R = .195; Df = 19

The result of the analysis in table 4 reveals that the calculated R-value of 0.48 is higher than the critical R-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore means that there is relationship between leadership integrity and work engagement.

5. Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that wood carving cottage industry is the prominent culture of the people of Annang and is dominated by the male folks as shown be sex distribution of 194 male representing 97% as against 6 respondents (3%) of women.

The result of this study also reveals that leadership trust positively determines the rate with which workers engage in their tasks in the wood carving cottage industry in Annang communities. The finding of the analysis of first hypothesis is in line with the study of Wong, Spence-Laschinger and Cummings (2010) who discovered that trust has a positive effect on work engagement and that since trust involves the free exchange of knowledge, ideas and information it led employees to engage in work whole heartedly. Majority of the respondents that constituted 92% of those interviewed were of the view that lack of trust on the part of the leaders in the business has made many of the apprentice to lack the zeal to learn the wood carving art of the community leading to a decline in the business. Ebitu (2005) agrees with this fact that building high level of trust is crucial to the survival and growth of any organization even cottage industries.

Furthermore, the findings of the second hypothesis show that integrity of leaders determines workers engagement in work. When worker perceive that their leaders are willing to relate with them and are genuinely ready to teach them the various skills in the act of wood carving, the workers will be eager to engage in work to sustain the business and to acquire the skill. This position is supported by the views of Amos et al. (2017), who maintained that integrity offers a very logical reason to trust someone. And the feeling of fairness or moral character will provide a sort of predictability that can help individuals cope with uncertainty and engage in work. Majority of the respondents that constituted 90% of those interviewed were of the view that when a leader is morally just, truthful, easy to relate with, and willing to guide the workers it will elicit positive disposition towards work.

The study shows that ethical leadership is essential in the wood carving cottage industry in Annang Community of Ikot Epene, of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Trust and integrity which are the composition of an ethical leader propel encourage workers to work. Worker builds faith on their leaders and would want to go productivity lane with them.

6. Recommendations

The study made the following suggestions:

Since the study discovered that work engagement in the workplace will increase when trust and integrity between leaders and followers are developed. The leadership should improve these through promotion of open information sharing to the development and empowerment of the workers.

The leaders should be sincere in their dealings with workers and evolve practical guidelines that would suggest leading through ethical role modelling and develop a fair attitude towards relating with the workers.

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