

PREDICTIVE IMPACTS OF PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP STYLES ON UNION COMMITMENT AMONG FACULTY MEMBERS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictive impacts of perceived leadership styles on union commitment among faculty members in South-East Nigeria. A total of 404 lecturers, drawn through systematic random sampling from government-owned ASUU-affiliated Universities in South-east Nigeria participated in the study. Ages of participants ranged from 35-58 years with a mean age of 42.66 years and Standard Deviation on 4.00. Male participants were 302 representing 74.75% of the study sample. Female participants were 102 representing 25.25% of the total sample size. The study design was cross-sectional with two levels of leadership: consideration leadership style; and initiating structure leadership style. One hypothesis, stating that initiating structure rather than consideration leadership style will be more predictive of union commitment among faculty members was tested using regression analysis. Results of regression analysis showed that initiating structure rather than consideration leadership style significantly predicted union commitment among faculty members: $R^2 = 0.38$; $F = 371.15$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % (1.14, 1.53) for initiating structure leadership and $F = 371.15$, $p < 0.08$; 95 % (-.43, .028) for consideration leadership. This result confirmed the study hypothesis. Implications and study limitations were highlighted.

Keywords: Consideration Leadership, Initiating Structure Leadership, Union Commitment

Introduction

Leadership style, actual or perceived, influences the behaviors employees emit in their workplaces and work communities (Kritsonis, 2004). Leadership in the world of work can be regarded as the process of influencing employees to strive willingly (or coercively, depending upon the nature of the disposition from which authority is being exercised) toward the achievement of corporate goals (Anyaeibunam and Ogbeide, 2016). Perceptions of leadership styles have been implicated in a number of irritant workplace behaviors (Johari, 2006; Ogbeide, 2012; Anyaeibunam and Ogbeide, 2016) such as the display of incessant confrontational engagements with workplace authorities (Ogbeide, 2012) as well as sketching of commitments towards unions rather than to the employing organizations (Johari, 2006).

Union commitment validates the allegiance of workers to their unions; and particularly represents the strength of their identification with, and involvement in their union (Gordon,

Philport, Burt, Thompson and Spiller, 1980). It describes the extent to which employees identify with, and internalize the goals, philosophies and beliefs of their unions.

The commitments employees extend to their unions have been found to be largely motivated by the leadership behaviors of employers (Kelloway, 1992; Okene, 2008). Employee commitment to the employing organization rather than the union is particularly critical. This is because commitment to the union is negatively related to good employee retention (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Riketta, 2002; Organ, Podsakov and Mackenzie, 2006) and positively related to counter-productive workplace behaviors (Okene, 2008; Ogbuide, 2012) and turnover (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005); and the latter inexorably attracts loss of organizational memory, diminished social capital as well as compromised morale on the part of the remaining employee (Dess & Shaw, 2001; Ahmad & Riaz, 2011; Ogbuide, 2012).

The current study investigated perceptions of leadership styles held, and the propensities towards union commitment, by faculty members of Government-owned, ASUU-affiliated University organizations in South-east Nigeria. This study is expected to interrogate the contexts under which university lecturers operate, and seek to identify the dynamics that would cause the university lecturer to exhibit loyalty towards his union (the academic staff union of universities, ASUU) to the overt detriment of his employing university that facilitates his means of livelihood. The interrogation outcomes are expected to be leveraged by relevant authorities to effectively diffuse this predilection for allegiance to unions; and promote more harmonious employer-employee relations, for the facilitation of improved teaching-learning climates in university organizations in Nigeria.

Leadership Styles

The study of leadership has remained a pivotal component of organizational behavior; and so far no other role in organization has generated more interest than that of the leader (Wundt and Marquardt, 2000). Leadership behavior has been conceptualized into two broad categories of consideration leadership and initiating structure leadership (Stogdill, 1963; Dum Dum, Lowe & Avolio, 2005; Lawrence, 2007). Consideration leadership behavior is characterized by warmth and respect for employees. This tends to stimulate strong feelings of stake-holding and belongingness in the workers which they often reciprocate with increased organizational commitment; in consonance with the espousals of the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964).

In contrast, initiating structure leadership behavior is seen as deficient in socio-emotional content, and appears to be exclusively concerned with work quantification and methodology. Perceptions of such leadership dispositions often cause workers to be exasperated and tend to incite them toward organizational resentment (Anyaeibunam & Ogbuide, 2016) and allegiance to their unions.

In this study, we also refer to other leadership styles of similar hues, including transformational and transactional leadership styles which are respectively analogues to consideration and initiating structure leadership behaviors (Bass and Avolio, 1997; Anuradha and Venka 2000; Higgs, 2003; Buford, Bedeian & Lindner, 2005).

Union Commitment

Broadly speaking, the process by which the goals and philosophies of the unions and those of the workers become congruent constitutes union commitment. It is the strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in a particular organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). Union commitment has been conceptualized along two broad dimensions: ideological union commitment, which represents workers' support for unions based on identification with the union's values and ideologies; and instrumental union commitment which validates an attachment anchored on rewards and benefits the union facilitates for members (Sverke & Kuruville, 1995).

Leadership Styles and Union Commitment

Strictly speaking, workers tend to be driven into the embrace of their unions under a climate of perceived offensive organizational dynamics which the workers have observed to be dominant for a reasonable period of time, and which they abstract may still be on-going. Consequently, any perceived leadership disposition that awakens worker consciousness of seeking union assistance for some respite in the work situation, remains complicit in workers' decision toward dependence on their unions. Generally speaking, perceptions of initiating structure leadership behaviors tend to stimulate and bolster workers' allegiance to their unions rather than to their employing organizations (Knight and Saal, 1995; Catano, Pond & Calloway, 2001; Johari, 2006).

Consistent with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), the beliefs the university lecturer holds in respect of his union's values, philosophies and instrumentalities, vis-à-vis his perceptions of the impacts of certain organizational contextual variables on his interests and aspirations, would shape the attitudes and dispositions he exhibits towards his union. Over time, these attitudes lead the university lecturer to the formation of intentions, ultimately resulting in the manifestations of certain overt industrial behaviors, which can either be pro-union or anti-union.

Propensities toward the display of loyalty to the union are to a significant extent driven by the perceptions workers hold regarding the subsisting leadership style in their workplaces (Brown, 2003). Certain workplace circumstances have the potential of weakening workers' allegiance to their employers, provoking cessation of organizational commitment, and consequently, precipitating a re-direction of same, toward the union. Some of these circumstances include perceptions or organizational injustice (McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992); organizational integrity, particularly the dimension of fidelity to collective agreements (Ogbeide, 2012); the level of motivation available in the workplace (Brown, 2003); as well as the leadership behaviors of organizational managements (Johari, 2006).

Leadership behaviors displayed by employers and/or organizational managements impact workers' propensities towards aligning their allegiance and commitment in the direction of the unions - especially for the instrumentality of helping to facilitate certain valued benefits. Initiating structure leadership conducts which are characterized by arbitrariness in decision making and non-consultation even in matters affecting workers, often incite workers towards workplace aggressiveness (Anyaeibunam & Ogbeide, 2016) and strong ideations of union commitment.

Workers tend to perceive such leadership conducts as unedifying and a subtle reference to them (workers) as mere industrial tools necessary only for task accomplishment. When feelings as these substantially persist, workers tend to resent their employing organizations, thus igniting an expediency to express stronger commitment to their unions (Okene 2000; Ugwu & Onyeneje, 2002).

Some studies have examined the effects of organizational leadership behaviors on employee commitment to their unions. From their study of 24 Sectional Heads and 419 Supervisory Personnel, in high and low productivity sections, Katz, Maccoby & Morse (1950) whose focus involved production-centered leadership (analogous to initiating structure leadership) versus employee-centered leadership (a variant of consideration leadership) found that Heads and Supervisors in high-productivity groups demonstrated more employee-centered leadership behaviors.

Fleishman and Harris (1962) examined the effects of initiating structure and consideration leadership behaviors on employee restiveness and turnover among 57 production foremen and their work groups. Their study outcome indicated that both restiveness and turnover were highest in groups whose foremen were low in consideration; thus reflecting a strong propensity, on the part of those workers, to align with their unions, to check the perceived excesses of these organizational authorities.

Dunteman & Bass (1963) studied foremen who exhibited relations-oriented leadership (analogous to consideration leadership) behaviors versus task-oriented leadership (analogous to initiating structure leadership) behaviors. Their results indicated that groups whose leader exhibited relations-oriented leadership were more committed to their jobs and posted higher levels of productivity.

Simon (1994) examined the effects of transformational leadership behaviors on organizational commitment among 228 employees from three different organizations. The study revealed that the transformational leadership behaviors were strongly correlated in a positive way with normative and affective commitment; thus underscoring its correlation, with similar intensity, in a negative way, with union commitment.

In a study of 1,376 nurse, Bycio, Hackett & Allen (1995) reported that transformational leadership behavior (analogous to consideration leadership) was a strong predictor of organizational commitment; thus underscoring the capacity of transactional leadership behavior (analogous to initiating structure leadership) to readily predict union attachment.

Hypothesis

From the review of the relevant literatures, this study advanced the hypothesis that initiation structure leadership rather than consideration leadership style, will be more predictive of union commitment among university lecturers.

Method

Participants

A total of 404 participating lecturers, were drawn through systematic random sampling from government-owned, ASUU-affiliated Universities, in South-east Nigeria. The universities included Abia State University (ABSU) Uturu; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu Unvierisry (COOU), Uli; Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Abakaliki; Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Enugu; and Imo State University (IMSU) Owerri.

Ages of participants ranged from 35-58 years with a mean age of 42.66 years and Standard Deviation on 4.00. Male participants were 302 representing 74.75% of the study sample. Female participants were 102 representing 25.25% of the total sample size.

Instruments

Leadership: the leadership variable was measured using the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ – XII) by Stogdill (1963). The LBDQ-XII is a 12-item instrument which measures leadership along two dimensions - initiating structure; and consideration leadership behaviors.

Union Commitment: The Union Commitment Questionnaire (UCQ) used to measure this construct was adapted from the Organizational Commitment Scale by Noor Harun and Noor Hasrual (2006). Ogbeide (2012) established the reliability and validity of the LBDQ-XII and UCQ using a Nigerian setting. Also, Nnedum (2011) used the LBDQ-XII among a sample of young and adult public and private sector workers in Anambra State, Nigeria. The Cronbach alpha values for the young and adult employees in the public sector were respectively 0.89 and 0.83; and for the private sector, the values were 0.96 and 0.78 respectively. Sekaram (2000) had mentioned that reliability coefficients in the range of 0.6 to 0.8 as well as 0.8 and above are considered adequate for scientific investigations.

Results

Table 1 Regression Analysis, Consideration and Initiating Structure Leadership on Union Commitment

Source	R ²	F	df	Sig	B	95% Conf. Interval		Sig
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Constant	UNION COMMITMENT							
	.38	371.15	2	.001				
Consideration					-.09	-.432	.027	.08
Initiating Struc.					.70	1.139	1.543	.001

Results of regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicate that the leadership variable alone accounted for 38% of the variance in union commitment. For initiating structure leadership, $R^2 = 0.38$, $F = 371.25$, $p < .001$; 95% (1.14, 1.53). For consideration leadership $R^2 = 0.38$; $F = 371.15$, $P < 0.08$; 95% (-0.43, 0.03). Also, the beta values of -.09 and .70, respectively for consideration leadership and initiating structure leadership, underscore the culpability of the initiating structure leadership in tendencies toward union commitment among university lecturers.

These results show that initiating structure leadership behavior, rather than consideration leadership behavior was predictive of union commitment among faculty members in Nigeria. This confirms the study hypothesis which states that initiating structure leadership rather than consideration leadership, will be more predictive of union commitment among university lecturers.

Discussions

This study investigated the predictive impact of perceived leadership styles on union commitment among university lecturers, in south-east Nigeria. The study hypothesized that initiating structure leadership, rather than consideration leadership would be more predictive of union commitment among university lecturers. Result of regression analysis showed that initiating structure rather than consideration leadership style was actually more predictive of union commitment among faculty members: $R^2 = 0.38$; $F = 371.15$, $p < 0.001$; 95% (1.14, 1.53). This result confirms the hypothesis.

This result corroborates earlier findings by Fleishman & Harris (1962); Meyer (1968); as well as Seltzer and Bass (1990) that union commitment and turnover rates were higher in work groups under initiating structure leadership. The outcome of this study also confirmed previous findings by Simon (1994) and Catano, Pond & Calloway (2001) that transactional

leadership behaviors (analogous to initiating structure leadership) elicited stronger attachment to unions.

The result is also in agreement with prior findings by Brown (2003) and Okene (2008) that leadership behaviors that are exclusively task-oriented, arbitrary and lacking in socio-emotional content tend to cause workers to develop attachments to their unions; which they perceive as capable of protecting them against employers' exploitation and excesses.

These findings indicate that the awareness of leadership high-handedness, militaristic conducts as well as low prospects of being able to make contributions even to those issues affecting them in their work situations often lead workers toward developing attachments to their unions.

This calls for appreciation of the reality that the man by and large, could be quite rational in his conducts. He will, prior to embarking on any critical decision, including where to sketch his allegiance, carefully evaluate the likely outcomes of his intended actions, consequent upon which he ultimately goes ahead with the prospective action or aborts it. The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) can be used to explain this. The beliefs the university lecturer holds in respect of his union's values, philosophies and instrumentality, vis-à-vis his perceptions of the prevailing organizational dynamics; particularly the leadership styles, tend to shape the attitudes and dispositions he subsequently exhibits towards his union and the employing organization.

Over time, these attitudes may lead the university lecturer to the formation of certain intentions; ultimately leading to manifestations of some overt industrial behaviors which can be either anti-or pro the organization or the union. This is a confirmation of the assertion by Okpara (2005) that the motivation of an individual to perform any given task, or to assume membership of an association (including ASUU membership), is determined by the value that individual places on the particular choice compared to other alternatives available to him.

Results of this study revealed that lecturers who reflect an awareness of the stifling effects of initiating structure leadership behaviors on participation and involvement, especially on issues directly concerning their work lives, reported more positive attitudes toward their unions.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have a number of theoretical and practical implications in the general world of work. The illumination of critical work place dynamics that are predictive of, and contributory to certain industrial attitudes and behaviors, constitute a significant contribution to the enrichment of the quality of theoretical discussions in this sphere or study.

A significant industrial implication of this study is in the findings evidencing the positive association between initiating structure leadership and union commitment as well as the contrasting relationship between consideration leadership and union commitment among university lecturers.

Employers and relevant sundry authorities within the university system may therefore be able to leverage these insights, to effectively whittle down lecturers' dependence on unions (and the strongly associated likelihood of restive behaviors) by discouraging at all levels of the leadership hierarchy, autocratic management practices, and promoting a general leadership culture that guarantees broad-based participation from lecturers - especially on issues directly affecting their work lives.

While not instituting the exclusion of maintaining a strong hand on adherence to organizational rules, policies, and professional ethics, concerned authorities in university organizations are expected to practice such behaviors that extend trust, warmth, compassion and integrity; which the academics are very likely to reciprocate with increased organizational citizenship behaviors, in the form of enhanced commitment to their employing university organizations, less dependence on union for their needs gratification, as well as a profound aversion toward industrial belligerence.

Limitations of the Study

The study design was cross-sectional and not longitudinal. This is a veritable source of worry especially on account of possible attendance of common method variance.

A key limitation of this study had to do with the psychometric contradictions that existed with the LBDQ-XII instrument which was designed to assess initiating structure and consideration leadership styles. The initiating structure and consideration have for instance been found to be correlated (Weissenberg & Kavanagh, 1972) as well as independent (Schriesheim & Kerr, 1974). This is abstracted as some form of limitation on the study.

Also the universe of the sample generation is considered a source of limitations. Participants were sourced from populations of lecturers in government-owned ASUU-affiliated university organizations in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study sample therefore suffers some limitation in terms of capacity deficits at adequately capturing sundry socio-political and ethno-religious peculiarities that may characterize populations of different ownership structures, faiths, and other geo-political zones in the country.

Also, the fact that the leadership variable explains just 38% of the variance in union commitment suggests that other complicit variables exist that were not captured in this study. It is a source of limitation which requires consideration by future studies in this area.

Conclusion

This study investigated the predictive impacts of perceived leadership styles on union commitment among faculty members in government owned ASUU-affiliated university organizations in South-east Nigeria. Part of the focus of this study was to examine the extent of convergence of the findings of current study, with the outcomes of past studies. This is in consonance with Kantowitz, Roediger & Elme's (1994) assertion that converging operations are veritable means of enhancing the generalizability of scientific results. Indeed results obtained from this study substantially converged with findings of previous studies.

Result of the study also indicated that consideration leadership behavior not only diminished dependence on unions among lecturers, it also enhanced their allegiance to their organizations, as well as the resolve to sustain continued membership of their employing universities. The study findings revealed that initiating structure leadership behaviors traditionally characterized by arbitrariness, work quantification and methodology, tend to cause workers to develop attachments to their unions which the workers perceive as capable of protecting them against employers' excesses as well as assisting them to facilitate certain valued extrinsic benefits.

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APPENDIX

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Union Commitment	64.7170	3.5258	404
Consideration Leadership Style	26.6246	1.8409	404
Initiating Structure Leadership Style	26.7574	1.5825	404

Correlations

		Union Commitment	Consideration Leadership	Initiating Structure
Pearson Correlation	Union Commitment	1.000	.359	.616
	Consideration Leadership Style	.359	1.000	.902
	Initiating Structure	.616	.902	1.000
Sig (1-tailed)	Union Commitment			.000
	Consideration Leadership Style	.000	.000	
	Initiating Structure			.000
N	Union Commitment	404	404	404
	Consideration Leadership Style		404	404
	Leadership Style	404	404	404
	Initiating Structure	404	404	404

Model Summary

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.617 ^a	.380	.379	2.7776

a. Predictors: (Constant), Initiating structure, Consideration leadership style