

Conflict in Human Capital Relationships: the Impact of Job Satisfaction on Job Involvement in a Workplace

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Abstract--The labour-management relationship is often referred to as a natural adversary relationship, a disconnect, grounded in conflict. This study therefore examined the contribution of staff job satisfaction to their level of job involvement in a private institution. This study adopted a survey research design. One hundred and fifty (150) participants randomly selected completed the psychological tests. Multiple regression was used to analyse the data collected. The result showed that job satisfaction and demographic factors jointly predicted sixty four percent (64%) significant variance on job involvement. There is significant independent prediction of job involvement by age, job satisfaction and some characteristics which are supervision, fringe benefit, contingent reward, operating procedure, coworkers and communication. The implications of the result were discussed in line with corporate governance and conflict resolution.

Index Terms—Conflict resolution, Disconnect, Human capital relationships, Job satisfaction and involvement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Job involvement has been studied for over twenty decades in organizational behaviour, human capital management and relationships. Job involvement is viewed as an individual employee's psychological

identification to his/her job (Kanungo, 1982). It is the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job. Job involvement involves the internalization of values and importance of work in the lives of the individual employee (Lodahl, & Keyner, 1965). Advancing research work on job involvement is an important organizational objective because many researchers posited job involvement to be a primary determinant of organizational effectiveness (Pfeffer, 1994) and other outcomes such as role conflict and role ambiguity (Clinebell, & Shadwick 2005); absenteeism (Diefendorff, Brown, Karmin, & Lord, 2002); job performance and turnover (Freund, 2005).

According to Kanungo, Misra, & Dayalol (1975) all behaviour, including behaviour in work situations, springs from need states of the individual employee and is directed towards obtaining outcomes for the satisfaction of these needs. The amount of job involvement may depend upon the extent to which an employee perceives the needs as capable of being met on the job and may therefore keep a job that gives satisfaction. Locke and Lathan (1990) described job satisfaction as positive emotional state remaining from the appraisal of one's job. Job satisfaction is

often determined by employees' comparison and assessment of what the job is currently providing them, referring to outcome; and what the employees would like the job to provide, referring to expectation (Luthan, 1998). Job satisfaction represents several characteristics of a job situation such as the work itself, pay, supervision and coworkers. When the employees feel they are being treated very well and are being paid equitably, they are likely to have positive attitudes towards the job.

The employees are the human capital or human resource, the workforce or the labour of the organization. Human capital is viewed as an involvement and is often affected by management and relationships between employers and employees. When employees feel that they are working much harder than others in the workplace but are not being treated well and not given equitable pay they will probably have a negative attitude towards the work, the employer or coworkers. Thus, the employees may not be involved in their job.

Brown (1996) said "A state of involvement implies a positive and relatively complete state of engagement of core aspect of the self in the job, whereas a state of alienation implies a loss of individuality and separation of self from the work environment." A disconnect may probably ensue between employees and employers which may lead to three categories of employee classified within the employee engagement stratum in any workforce. According to Farotimi (2010) workforce is made up of fully engaged employees (25% to 30%); not engaged employees (55% to 60%) and actively disengaged employees (10% to 15%). Woodward and Buchholz (1987) described disengagement as employee psychological withdrawal from change; being physically present but mentally absent. When an employee is fully engaged in his work, his energy and focus are directed to attitudes such as job involvement. Engaged employees become organisation asset and will not likely think of leaving the organisation.

Employee growing disconnect poses a problem in the workplace especially in the human capital relationships. The labour-management relationship is often a natural adversary relationship (Olowu, 2008) a disconnect, grounded in conflict between two parties. There is a conflict in which the parties in a relationship are antagonistic towards the other over differences on basic goals, values and interests. Thus employees are dissatisfied with the distribution of the available rewards. The ultimate criterion for satisfaction of the needs of both parties, that is, employer and employee is to mutually resolve their conflict (Burton, 1990). All conflict has a resolution but not all conflict resolution is successful therefore for conflict resolution to be effective and successful both parties need to perceive that the

resolution was fair, of great benefit and in their best interest.

Baum (1989) proposed the overall approaches used in a conflict resolution which are termed competitive versus cooperative. The competitive approach is founded on assumptions of win-lose and entails dishonest communication, mistrust, and a rigid position from both parties. Both the win-lose approach and the competitive approach views conflict as negative that creates social trap for the two parties, in which each of the conflicting parties, rationally pursue its self-interest, and may become caught in mutually destructive behaviour (Meyer, 2008). Baum (1989) explained further that the cooperative strategy is founded on different assumptions based on the potential for win-win outcomes, honest communication, trust, openness to risk and vulnerability, and the notion that the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts (Tjosvold, 1991). Both the win-win approach and the cooperative approach view conflict as positive. On the whole, with the competitive approach a party may end up in a losing position while even in intense conflict a cooperative approach can lead to an overall win for both parties.

Several studies including those of (Hafer, & Martin, 2006; Ha-Young, 2007; Macky, & Boxall, 2008) revealed that job satisfaction had significant influence on job involvement. The results of researches such as Brown (1996) indicated that along with job satisfaction, demographic factors such as gender and level of education (Hao, Jung, & Yeuhui, 2009); age and gender (Chughtai, 2008) have association with job involvement. Farotimi (2010) revealed that the engaged employee demonstrates satisfaction and involvement to the mutual benefit of both self and the organization. However, Liao, Toya, Lepakm, & Hong, (2009) reported a disconnect between employers and employees perception of high involvement work system practices in the organization with employers perceiving a significantly higher level than employees. Hafer, and Martin (2006) discovered that having low job involvement contributes to employees' feelings of alienation in the organisation or feeling of separation between what the employees see as their life and the job they do.

Previous researches used employees who are university lecturers (Chughtai, 2008); bankers and insurance brokers (Hao, Jung, & Yeuhui, 2009) staff of public and private organization (Ha-Young, 2007; Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov, 2010) to study job satisfaction and job involvement. There is a dearth of research on using job satisfaction and job involvement in studying conflict between employer and employee in human capital relationships. The main purpose of the current study is to examine the predictive ability of job satisfaction, age, sex, and staff status on job involvement in private institution. Consequently, the following hypothesis was formulated and tested. Hypothesis 1: Jointly and independently job satisfaction, age, sex, and staff status will predict job involvement.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants were one hundred and fifty (150) staff of

a private university in Nigeria with 80(53.3%) males and 70(46.7%) females. Their staff status was 99(66%) academic staff and 51(34%) non-academic staff. Their age ranged from 28 years to 54 years with an average age of 38.17 and standard deviation of 6.68.

B. Design

The study is a survey research adopting the ex-post factor design; the variables of the study are not under the direct manipulation of the researchers. Job satisfaction, age, sex and staff status were the independent variables while job involvement is the dependent variable.

C. Instrument

Job involvement questionnaire scale by Kanungo (1982) is a 10 item scale to measure the degree to which employee is engaged with the job. Rating is in Likert format ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The author reported alpha coefficient of 0.80. The current study reported alpha coefficient of 0.89.

Job satisfaction survey (JSS) by Spector (1985) is a 36 item scale made up of nine facet or characteristics scale to assess employee attitudes about the job and aspects of the job. Each characteristic is assessed with four items, and total score is computed from all items. Rating scale is from Disagree Very Much (1) to Agree Very Much (6). Internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient alphas) for the respective nine characteristics as reported by the author are: pay (items 1, 19, 20, 28) 0.75, promotion (items 2, 10, 11, 33) 0.73, supervision (items 3, 12, 21, 30) 0.82, fringe Benefits (items 4, 13, 22, 29) 0.73, contingent rewards (items 5, 14, 23, 32) 0.76, operating conditions (items 6, 15, 24, 31) 0.62, coworkers (items 7, 16, 25, 34) 0.60, nature of work (items 8, 17, 27, 35) 0.78, and communication (items 9, 18, 26, 36) 0.71. The total coefficient alpha for all the 9 characteristics that is the whole scale is 0.91. The current study reported for the total scale alpha coefficient of 0.85

D. Procedure

Data were obtained in a survey from randomly selected participants who were assured of their confidentiality in completing a self-administered questionnaire. Out of the two hundred (200) questionnaires administered, one hundred and fifty (150) had usable data giving a response rate of 75%.

E. Results

To determine the joint and independent prediction of job satisfaction, age, sex, and job status on job involvement, multiple regression analysis was computed and the results are as presented in Table I. The result revealed significant joint prediction of age, sex, staff status, job satisfaction, and its 9 characteristics which are pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards (performance based rewards), operating procedure (required rules and procedure), coworkers, nature of work, and communication on job involvement $F(13,131) = 17.52; P < 0.01$. All the predictor variables jointly contributed 64% significant variance to job involvement. Therefore, the main hypothesis which states that jointly and independently job satisfaction, age, sex, and staff status will predict job

involvement was supported by the result.

The results showed significant independent prediction of job involvement by age ($\beta = 0.39$; $P < 0.01$), job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41$; $P < 0.05$), supervision ($\beta = 0.81$; $P < 0.01$), fringe benefit ($\beta = 0.40$; $P < 0.01$), contingent reward ($\beta = 0.55$; $P < 0.01$), operating procedure ($\beta = 0.22$; $P < 0.01$), coworkers ($\beta = 0.95$; $P < 0.01$), and communication ($\beta = 0.39$ $P < 0.05$). However, sex, job status, pay, promotion, and nature of work were not significant predictors of job involvement.

TABLE I. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS SHOWING THE INDEPENDENT AND JOINT PREDICTION OF JOB SATISFACTION, AGE, SEX AND STAFF STATUS ON JOB INVOLVEMENT

Variable	β	t
Pay	0.06	0.54
Promotion	0.04	0.34
Supervision	0.81**	8.07
Fringe benefits	0.40**	3.37
Contingent rewards	0.55**	3.45
Operating procedure	0.22**	2.94
Coworkers	0.95**	6.91
Nature of work	0.08	0.72
Communication	0.39**	2.80
Job satisfaction	0.41*	2.20
Age	0.39**	2.86
Sex	0.14	1.74
Staff status	0.08	0.99
R	0.80	
R ²	0.64	
F	17.52**	

β = Beta; t = t test; R² = variance; ** $P < 0.01$; * $P < 0.05$

III. DISCUSSION

Result of the study indicated that there is joint significant influence of age, sex, staff status, job satisfaction, and its 9 characteristics on job involvement. This finding is typical of previous studies (Hafer, & Martin, 2006; Ha-Young, 2007; Macky, & Boxall, 2008). The result indicated that older employees are more involved in their jobs than younger employees, the study supported Chughtai (2008). The significant positive influence of job satisfaction and 6 of its characteristics on job involvement implied that employees with high levels of job satisfaction, supervision, fringe benefit, contingent reward, operating procedure, coworkers, and communication are more involved in their jobs. A plausible explanation for this is found in the argument of Luthan (1998) that job satisfaction of employees is often determined by how well outcome provided by employers meet or exceeds expectations of the employees. Employees who feel they are being treated very well and are being paid equitably will have positive attitudes e.g. involvement towards the job otherwise, if not paid equitably will have negative attitudes e.g. low involvement towards the job, the boss or coworkers.

Again, having low job involvement contributes to employees' feelings of alienation in the organization (Hafer, & Martin, 2006) a disconnect and disengagement of the mental self when the physical self is still present at work. The human capital relationship is challenged, becomes adversarial because conflict manifest in the needs, values and perception of both parties in the relationship (Olowu, 2008). Conversely, the satisfaction of the needs of both parties is the ultimate criterion for a mutually satisfactory

resolution of their conflict (Burton, 1990). Both employer and employee will benefit greatly to reduce labour turnover, increase productivity and efficiency, increase morale and cooperation, maximize profit, and service potential. Cooperative approach and win-win approach are advocated for positive outcome for both the employer and the employees.

IV. IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The practical implication of this study is that a conflict-positive organization is possible when employees as shown in the result of this study have positive job satisfaction which predicted high job involvement.

Organization that is management may impact employees' feelings of involvement through

- human capital management policies such as conflict management training and
- create competitive advantage through human capital by changing personnel (e.g. transfer) and changing structure (e.g. minimise status distinction)
- value and celebrate diversity in its workforce, confront and view differences as opportunities for innovation.
- appeal to the organization's superordinate goals by uniting behind cooperate goals that are common to both parties to achieve mutual benefit.
- empower employees skillfully with high involvement work practices and information sharing,
- embrace equitable distribution of contingent reward and expand resources where necessary.
- Both employer and employees should celebrate their conflict management successes and work out plans for ways they can improve in the future. Future research should make use of the employees of the public sector.
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