



The moderating effect of benevolence on the impact of organisational culture on employee creativity[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Rooted in the Nigerian manufacturing industry experience, this study, investigates the effect of top management leaders' benevolence on the impact of organisational culture (OC) on employee creativity. Structural equation modelling (SEM) results indicated that top management leaders' benevolence, and adhocracy OC have positive and significant effects on employee creativity. Market and clan OC have significant negative effects on employee creativity, and hierarchy OC has no significant effect on employee creativity. Likewise, benevolence has no significant moderating effect on the impact of clan OC on employee creativity, and has a significant negative moderating effect on the impact of adhocracy OC on employee creativity. SEM results demonstrate that benevolence has a significant positive moderating effect on the impact of market OC on employee creativity, and a significant negative moderating effect on the impact of hierarchy OC on employee creativity. Policy implications and future directions are also discussed.

1. Introduction

Martha, Carolina, Joseph, Niels, and Pei-Chuan (2002) advocated that organisational culture (OC) is “the pattern of variations within a society, or, more specifically, as the pattern of deep-level values and assumptions associated with societal effectiveness, shared by an interacting group of people” (p. 276). Organisations across several countries have experienced diverse challenges as a result of applying an OC that is not supportive of the kind of values they require to engender employee creativity (Dong, 2002; Huston & Sakkab, 2006; Peterson, 2005). Several Nigerian manufacturing organisations are known to employ a predominant hierarchical OC (Gabriel & Kpakol, 2014), and studies (Gupta, 2011; Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Sanz-Valle, 2016) lament that this has a negative impact on employee creativity.

The Nigerian manufacturing industry is an integral part of the country's economic development – a catalyst for modernisation with propensities of creating multiplier effects (Akume & Abdullahi, 2013). However, some studies (Dimnwobi, Ekesiobi, & Mgbemena, 2016; Emeka, Ifeoma, & Emmanuel, 2015) have identified a growing deterioration in its innovation capabilities. This reflects a lack of an engendered employee creativity workforce, and the application of an unsupportive OC. Employee creativity in general feeds off of creative

ideas (Bai, Lin, & Li, 2016; Gilson & Litchfield, 2017). Nevertheless, creative ideas repeatedly get lost or repressed in Nigerian manufacturing organisations, as they sometimes appear to be unwelcomed by managers (Akume & Abdullahi, 2013). A parallel case is when top management leaders exhibit unreceptive attitudes to creative ideas employees share by exhibiting questionable, unkind or malevolent behaviours within Nigerian manufacturing organisations (Gabriel & Kpakol, 2014; John, 2011). Hence, there is need for top management leaders to consider becoming more benevolent, since it could have a rather positive effect on employee creativity (Zhou & George, 2003).

Employee creativity is an individual level phenomenon that mirrors the production of creative ideas, builds uniquely upon existing ideologies, and suggests novel approaches to create new solutions (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Ogbeibu, Senadjki, & Luen Peng, 2017). In order to engender employee creativity, top management leaders ought to recognise the role of organisational benevolence. The extent to which an individual is perceived to possess and display good intentions towards another is denoted as benevolence (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). By becoming more benevolent, organisations may be able to build strong resilience against a future of constant change (Castro, Gomes, & de Sousa, 2012). The need to have a benevolent top management leader who strongly expresses emotions that reflect goodwill, compassion, care, altruism and kindness towards employees in order to engender

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employee creativity; is becoming a necessity for achieving successful innovative outcomes at the organisational level (Wang & Jap, 2017).

Through the demonstration of benevolence by top management leaders, a work environment characterised as humane, supportive, comfortable, trusting, and respectful could be created, and this likewise incites observable benefits for the common good of organisational members (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). Basically, benevolent top management leaders demonstrate genuine, and kind behaviours that have positive impacts on their employees around them (Lin, Ma, Zhang, Li, & Jiang, 2016). Demonstrating benevolence within an organisation, may require top management leaders to exhibit emotional ties and concerns for employees' career growth (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). Being benevolent may also mean becoming mentors or coaches to employees, and the creation of opportunities for correcting mistakes, and understanding why employees might be exhibiting behaviours that repels creativity engenderment (Wang & Jap, 2017; Zhou & George, 2003). This in turn instils a sense of care, and reciprocity in employees who may consequently feel obligated to exhibit positive behaviours, and desirable attitudes towards employee creativity initiatives (Wang & Cheng, 2010).

Considering the important role of benevolence in fostering employee creativity, an increasing wave of research has provoked several investigations into the impacts of top management leaders' benevolence (Lin et al., 2016; Wang & Jap, 2017). Equally, the work of extant research mirrors the impact of benevolence on organisational citizenship behaviour (Liang, Ling, & Hsieh, 2007), organisational commitment (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012), and buyer-supplier exchange (Wang & Jap, 2017). Despite the increasing attention the benevolence paradigm has received over the years, Lin et al. (2016) accentuate that much is yet to be done to investigate the impact of benevolence on employee creativity, as this has so far been relatively understudied. Employee creativity is important for organisational development, and profit maximization (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Mehlika, Ismai, and Mehmet (2014) also support that employee creativity is a prerequisite for achieving organisational competitive advantage. Likewise, extant research has also demonstrated a positive correlation between benevolence and employee creativity (Lin et al., 2016; Wang & Cheng, 2010).

Therefore, it is further espoused that when benevolence is displayed through strong emotional expressions, it is argued to have a positive effect on the creativity of employees (Chughtai, 2016; Zhou & George, 2003). These effects may however be unpredictable when benevolence is introduced under the strong influence of distinct OC dimensions. Therefore, top management leaders ought to take into consideration, the various OC dimensions in which their benevolence could help engender employee creativity. Additionally, Cameron (2008) proposed the clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy OC dimensions. In Cameron and Quinn's (1999) competing values framework (CVF), the adhocracy OC reflects an entrepreneurial and creative workforce. It is comprised of organisational members who are mostly risk takers and who have a drive to commit towards innovations and scientific experimentations (Heritage, Pollock, & Roberts, 2014). Clan OC mirrors a responsive environment where employees share a lot of values with each other. This is due to an organisation operating as a family or set of best friends (Cameron, 2008). The market OC is mostly result oriented, and characterised by organisational managers that are defined by their productiveness, directive capabilities, competitiveness and focus. The Hierarchy OC reflects structured and formalised work systems, that often consist of already prescribed procedures, as well as strict rules and routines that govern employee behaviour.

The CVF has been employed in distinct studies to examine employee creativity (Naranjo-Valencia, Sanz-Valle, & Jimenez-Jimenez, 2010; Obenchain & Johnson, 2004). However, some of these studies mirror endogeneity issues by examining only two or three CVF dimensions, in empirical investigations (Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2010; Lau & Ngo, 2004). Likewise, conflicting perspectives regarding the effect(s) of OC on employee creativity has led to a growing debate among researchers (Einstein & Hwang, 2007; Mobarakeh, 2011). Several distinct results

of empirical studies (Gupta, 2011; Karamipour et al., 2015) have caused an on-going divide as to whether OC indeed has positive, negative or no effect at all on employee creativity. While focus has increased in an attempt to reach a congruence in the prior findings of extant research, the role of top management leaders' benevolence has been grossly understudied over the years (Wang & Cheng, 2010). Top management leaders' benevolence is arguably becoming a tool by which top management leaders may drive initiatives that engenders employee creativity (Castro et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2016). However, the degree and type of effect of benevolence in diverse OCs may vary due to dissimilar OC dimension features, and this occurrence is yet lacking adequate attention. Much still has to be done to provoke a congruence of diverse views of extant research results.

In an effort to further engender employee creativity Lin et al. (2016) stressed that even with the flourishing investigations of extant research, the impact of benevolence on employee creativity still lacks adequate consideration. This is in light of its positive effect on employee creativity (Wang & Cheng, 2010). Despite its espoused positive effect, diverse values embedded within diverse OCs could also cause varying changes in the outcome of demonstrated benevolence. Values that portray benevolence might either foster or collide against already established norms of organisational members who may embrace and adopt or instantly detest them. Therefore, in order to engender employee creativity, top management leaders ought to take into consideration, the probable effects benevolence might have under the influence of diverse OCs. Over the years OC, benevolence and employee creativity have respectively received increasing attention in diverse cultural contexts across the world (Mobarakeh, 2011; Lin et al., 2016). However, much is yet to be done to examine their collective undergirding under a similar cultural context. Hence, this study attempts to investigate the moderating effects of top management leaders' benevolence on the impact of OC on employee creativity in the Nigerian manufacturing industry.

2. Benevolence, OC and employee creativity within Nigerian manufacturing industry

From the 1950s to 1960s Nigeria was recognised to be at a similar innovative development level as countries like Brazil, Indonesia and even Pakistan. However, current reports indicate that, Nigeria is now ranked below them all (Cornell University, INSEAD, WIPO, 2015; Egbochuku, 2001). Even in Africa, Nigeria has fallen behind several countries like Ghana, Botswana, and even Mauritius, in terms of innovations and creativity capability (Cornell University; INSEAD; WIPO, 2016). Over the years, several initiatives have been employed to improve Nigeria's creativity and innovation prowess. Unfortunately, in the 2015 Global Creativity Index (GCI), Nigeria is not even among the 139 countries that were highlighted (Florida, Mellander, & King, 2015). Thus, Dimnwobi et al. (2016) strongly suggested that a key industry that is proficient in revitalising the creative economy of Nigeria is the Nigerian manufacturing industry. As an engine for national innovation growth, the Nigerian manufacturing industry has the propensity to foster national economic wealth (Ikemefuna & Abe, 2015). The Nigerian manufacturing industry mirrors a platform that ought to be equipped with resources for engendering employee creativity and improved innovativeness (Popoola & Fagbola, 2014). Regrettably, reports highlight in recent years that it has severely underperformed. The creativity prowess of the Nigerian manufacturing sector was ranked at 78% before late 1980s. Nonetheless, it has faced a constant decline and is evidenced to have decreased to about 29.3% over the years (Emeka et al., 2015). George and Olumide (2011), therefore stressed that Nigerian manufacturing organisations could learn from a country like Japan, which has established international recognition in engendering employee creativity.

However, since Nigerian manufacturing organisations are mostly encompassed by a hierarchical form of OC (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004),

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