

INFLUENCE OF ETHICS AND WORKPLACE COUNSELLING ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AMONG IKENNE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF OF OGUN STATE

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the influence of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance among Ikenne Local Government Staff of Ogun State. **Method:** The study is a descriptive study with a population size of three hundred and forty-five (345). It adapted the Ethical Evaluation Questionnaire (EEQ), workplace counselling, and organizational performance questionnaire. **Findings:** Findings revealed that ethical beliefs and practice in an organization, and the level of workplace counselling have an impact on the performance of the organization. **Conclusion:** If ethics are poor in the organization, it shows that there are poor ethical practices among top management staff which is in turn copied by middle and lower employees. Also, employees may avoid workplace counselling when they believe that they will be manipulated, discriminated or perceived lack of confidentiality. It is important for organizational leaders to build synergy among workers, upholding trust, and integrity.

Keywords: Ethics, Workplace Counselling, Organizational Performance

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are established to meet the needs and demands of citizens. While some provide quality services in terms of economic, social, financial, political and technological growth, observation shows that some do not, towards meeting the goals and objectives for which they were established. According to Bolatito and Ibrahim (2014), Ene (n.d.) the performance of the Nigerian local government is limited due to the location where it is located, hike in the cost of goods bought by workers, lack of means for internal revenue generation, ghost worker syndrome, shortage of qualified manpower, political instability, lack of accountability and transparency, involvement and cooperation by local government workers in breaching awarded contracts, bribery and corruption among workers especially top management staff, lack of

motivation at work, insufficient budgetary allocation among others. This has resulted in organizational leaders seeking possible options to ensure quality organizational performance. According to Tuvulla and Byaruhanga (2017), some leaders in trying to boost organizational performance in the organization are forced to deal with issues such as downsizing, changes in policy, and the introduction of new technological devices towards ensuring quality organizational performance. Other scholars such as Hunjra, Butt, and Rehman (2010); Kinoti (2012); Mwangi and Wekesa (2017); and Dastane (2020) among others have examined the influence of economic, technological, financial factors and management practices on organizational performance as some organizations are yet to satisfactorily meet the demands and needs for which they were established. Hence, the need for this study, on the influence of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance.

One of the major trends in organizations that determines and evaluates the actions of both leaders and subordinates is ethics. According to Omisore and Oyende (2015) considering the present global economy, organizations that desire good governance must ensure that their organizational culture is based on good work ethics, morals, and values. Ethics is one of the branches of axiology that deals with the issues of morality and the behavioural conduct of individuals. It emphasizes measures by which human behaviour and conduct can be measured in areas such as accountability, probity, and discipline (Nwosu, 1989) which are connected to morality. Morality is how people behave in line with acceptable norms and values. Thus, ethics is a moral judgment or right action towards determining what is good or right (Ogunji, 2008). For Okoli et al., (2019), ethics are standards put in place as a parameter for guiding the principles of any organization. They are morally acceptable codes of conduct that every individual in a group expects others to follow (Davis, 1990). In the contemporary world of work, work ethics is gaining recognition as a result of its role in assessing the behaviour and performance of workers as it is fundamental to organizational performance (Parboteeah and Kapp, 2008; Schminke, et al., 2005; Mgaya, 2016). This is because it is a laid down standard of conduct and integrity to apply even in organizations. Therefore, some of these standards among others include fairness in all dealings, transparency, accountability, integrity, honesty, dedication, and impartiality. Despite this role, organizations have been observed to be facing various forms of scandals and malpractices (Samir, et al., 2017). Local government workers have been observed to be facing pressure from clients. In the words of Glenn, et al., (2016), “in the current context of public sector cuts, frontline workers are also finding themselves under mounting pressure as their colleagues behind the scenes, in administrative and support services, lose their jobs. Without this vital backbone of support to frontline colleagues and service users, the quality of public services is bound to suffer” (p. 4). They further posited that in the local government, about 500,000 jobs have been lost since 2010 making those left behind face pressures as well as additional workload. Despite this, local government workers are expected to exercise moral judgment in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities. Okoli, et al., (2019) observed that there is total unaccountability in public organizations, particularly in the local government administration. For them, workers appear to have a field day concerning financial accountability as public funds are being misappropriated. This brings up issues such as misconduct and poor stewardship as it concerns public resources and interests. Thus

resulting in losses of resources which were intended to help in the provision of economic support and social development for the public (United Nations 2000). Negative work ethics are displayed by employees in the Local Governments in Nigeria which is seen in their level of non-commitment to work, lateness to work, indiscipline, abandonment of duty, insubordination, truancy, absenteeism and disloyalty, towards accomplishing the goals and objectives of the local government (Abubakar, 2010; Ananti and Umeifekwem, 2012). All of these contribute to poor organizational performance in local government areas and as such, hinders the quality delivery of task, duties, and responsibilities since they are closer to the citizens. Although some employees are equipped with morals, observation shows that they are involved in unethical issues as a result of the feeling of stress, neglect by their leaders, and stagnation in terms of work status. This, therefore, makes workplace counselling essential to organizational performance by helping workers develop a positive understanding of self, providing opportunities for individual growth and development, fostering a good working relationship, reducing the impact of psychological issues among employees, managing cultural differences, and instil in workers positive self-esteem. All these can be achieved through workplace counselling. According to Greenwood, (2006), workplace counselling is that scope of professionalism, concerned with both personal and work-related problems such as conflict with a colleague(s), building positive relationships with others, coping with crisis, and developing personal insights. It provides employers with the opportunity of recognizing the worth of their workers. As a result, capable of helping the organization to save more by contributing to its reputation as a caring employer, lifting pressure off organizational leaders through the provision of a constructive channel of dealing with „difficult“ workers or circumstances, and reducing the rate of absence from work (McLeod and Henderson, 2001). For Cheng (2012) workplace counselling is paid for by the employer as it offers brief psychological therapy for workers of an organization. Payne (2011) in Omoegun, et al., (2018), a referral could be triggered by leaders in an organization after a member of a team has been observed not to be coping effectively with others in the course of discharging his or her duty. This negatively affects organizational performance as the individual will be unable to cope with his/her assigned duties. When faced with such a situation, the leader/employer may seek to refer the particular worker for counselling towards support and improvement of his/her performance, his/her understanding of team dynamics and minimize the risk of a negative impact on the organization. It is in this view that the research proposed to assess the influence of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance among Ikenne Local Government Staff of Ogun State. The specific objectives of the study are;

- a. To examine if ethics will have any significant contribution to organizational performance.
- b. To identify the influence of workplace counseling on organizational performance.
- c. To examine if there will be any combined contribution of ethics and workplace counseling on organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research design. It was carried out in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This study was based on the Transformational Model of Leadership and Management by James Burns, Machiavellianism and Utilitarianism theories of ethics. The population size for the study consists of 342 employees in various categories of staff: top, middle and low levels of management and a total enumeration sampling technique was adopted. A structured questionnaire was designed to deduce information from the respondents and was administered by the researcher to a sample of 330 respondents. The data collected were coded and subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. A questionnaire was adapted for this study such as the Ethical Evaluation Questionnaire (EEQ), and the workplace counselling questionnaire developed by Akoth (2014). The Ethical Evaluation Questionnaire is a valid and reliable instrument that can be applied to different professions. Gokce (2017) develops the instrument about the Islam religion in Turkish culture. Researchers and managers, on the other hand, can utilize the instrument to measure teachers' ethical judgment in schools across diverse cultures and religious dimensions of ethical judgment models. This is consistent with the influence of religious orientation, Machiavellianism, and utilitarianism on ethical decisions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Regression analysis on the significant relative contribution of ethics on organizational performance

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	51.715	.200			
Ethics	-.051	.004	-.602	-12.985	.000

Dependent Variable: Organization performance

Table I revealed the relative contribution of ethics to the organization. It could be deduced from the result there is a significant effect of ethics on organizational performance ($b = -.602$; $t = -12.985$, $P < 0.005$). Based on this the null hypothesis, hypothesis one was rejected. Hence, there is no significant relative contribution. According to Osibanjo et al., (2015) in their study on work ethics and employee job performance. They posited that good work ethics leads to meaningful organizational performance. Also, Ezeanyim and Ezeanolue (2021) affirmed that the ethical climate of an organization has a significant impact on its performance of an organization.

Table 2: Coefficients of the regression significant relative contribution of workplace counselling on organizational performance

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	62.883	.400			
Workplace counselling	-.150	.004	-.916	-34.922	.000

Dependent Variable: Organization performance

Table II revealed the relative contribution of workplace counselling on organizational performance. It could be deduced from the result there is a significant effect on organizational performance (Beta= -.916; t= -34922, P< 0.005). Hence, there is a significant relative contribution of workplace counselling on organizational performance. The result of this study is in line with the review of literature by Ekpang (2015) which indicated that the performance of an organization can be boosted through workplace counselling organized for workers to help them deal with their problems. According to Tuvulla and Byaruhanga (2017), workplace counselling has a significant impact on the performance of workers in an organization as it helped them cope with work and family-related issues.

Table 3: Model summary and coefficients of the multiple regressions, analysis for the combined contribution of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	69.714	2	34.857	2162.115	.000 ^b
	Residual	3.756	233	.016		
	Total	73.470	235			

Dependent Variable: Organisation performance

Predictors: (Constant), Workplace counselling, Ethics

Results in Table III show the significant influence of work ethics and workplace counselling, on organizational performance ($F_{(2,233)} = 2162.115, p < .05$). The null hypothesis stated that there will be no significant combined contribution of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance was rejected leading to the conclusion there will be a significant combined contribution of ethics and workplace counselling on organizational performance and that ethics and workplace jointly accounted for 76.3% of the variance in the organization.

DISCUSSION

Ethical practices in the organization most times are copied by middle and lower employees from the top management staff. However, well-established rules and regulations at work help promote good organisational performance in organizations. The recognition of the significance of cultivating and retaining valuable human resources is reflected in the practice of providing counselling services at the place of employment for issues that are relevant to work. This means that in any organization, the goal of workplace counselling is targeted at assisting employees towards meeting the corporate goals and objectives of the organization, reducing work hazards/accidents, helping employees in developing positive work attitudes and improving organizational performance. Sometimes, these goals may not be met because of some perceived factors that can limit employees from seeking workplace counselling. Some of these factors include employees' belief that they will be manipulated against their wish, stigma/discrimination of employees seeking counselling, perceived lack of confidentiality on the part of an employee on information disclosed during counselling, negative attitudes towards counselling and career repercussions among others.

The findings from this study, therefore, reveal the need for government and organizational leaders to ensure that monitoring is improved on the application of rules and regulations relating to workers. Scorecards can be used to periodically assess the work ethical views of workers in the organization. Finally, there is a need for training and retraining of workers to help them understand acceptable work ethics in the organization and the need for workplace counselling. Employees can be helped by implementing programs that are cost-effective and acceptable to all employees, establishing regulations that improve employee/organizational performance, and training department heads in counselling skills. Every firm must have a clear policy on counselling at the workplace to take into consideration the fact that every employee has their specific demands and needs.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

We declare that this manuscript is original, has not been published before and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

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