Employee Silence Management and Employee's Commitment of Selected Construction Firms in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The goal of every organisation is to have committed employees because a committed workforce brings added value to the organisation, including through their determination, proactive support, relatively high productivity, and an awareness of quality. Organizations, especially construction firms around the world have devoted efforts such as training, motivation, and job security to the management of the performance of employees. Despite these, certain deficiencies are observed in the commitment of employees, especially in the area of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. This study, therefore, investigated the remediation of low employee commitment with a focus on employee silence management in construction firms. The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was the staff of the selected construction firms in Lagos State Nigeria while the research advisor's sampling table was used to get a sample size of 474. A simple random sampling technique was adopted. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.530 to 0.871. The response rate was 94.6%. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that employee silence management has a significant combined effect on employee commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria (Adj.R^2 = 0.290; F (3,469) = 1.757, p < 0.05). The study concluded that employee silence management has a positive and significant effect on the employee commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study recommended that construction firms promote a supportive and inclusive work environment that values diversity, respects employee well-being, and encourages work-life balance.

Keywords: *Affective commitment, Continuance commitment, Normative commitment, Communication, Employee participation, Trust.*

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Background to the Study

It is the goal of every organisation to have committed employees because a committed workforce brings added value to the organisation, including through their determination, proactive support, relatively high productivity, and an awareness of quality. Committed employees help organisations perform better and achieve their goals because they feel connected to the organisation and are more productive and dedicated to their work. Given this, their commitment level, thus, is paramount in the organisation. Organisations, especially construction firms around the world have devoted efforts such as training, motivation, and job security to the management of the performance of employees. Despite these, certain deficiencies are observed in the commitment of employees, especially in the area of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Thus, this study focuses on the remediation of low employee commitment with a focus on employee silence management in construction firms. Globally, the commitment of employees has witnessed different empirical and industry attention. In the United States of America, the construction industry is one of the most significant industries with blooming opportunities, being at the same time the largest consumer of human resources (Poovitha et al., 2018). With expenditures reaching over 1,293 billion U.S. dollars, the United States is one of the largest construction markets worldwide. It is also observed that construction projects that were once stalled have accelerated their progress. Positive trends in the residential market are the primary drivers of the booming construction industry growth rate. As a result, profitability has become an issue in the construction industry because the industry is not attracting enough talent to fill the demand.

In Nigeria, although the country is blessed with a skilled workforce, the situation within its construction industry is ironic (Aghimien et al., 2019). While the Nigerian construction industry (NCI) is believed to be one of the highest employers of labor, the industry is still faced with problems of shortage of technically skilled workers (Bilau et al., 2015). The construction industry in Nigeria is known to be a major employer of labor and makes significant contributions to the economy (Nnaji-Ihedinmah et al., 2020). The industry adopts several flexible work arrangements and has a reputation for a high rate of employee turnover (Idowu, 2020). Again, the construction industry has witnessed the effects of global competitiveness and the shrinking of markets, which has resulted in restructuring and reengineering with attendant consequences. Part of the attendant consequences is that employees have displayed a high rate of lack of commitment which has brought a decline in the outcomes of the construction firms in Nigeria (Onubi et al., 2020). Due to a lack of collaboration, it is difficult to ensure key information streams and achieve organizational goals in such organizations (Köse & Köse, 2019). Hence the decision to remain silent obstructs the identification and correction of faults and issues, as well as the development of effective solutions (Orunbon & Modupe, 2021). Employee silence is viewed as an inefficient process that loses time and resources in this perspective. Employee quiet can be advantageous in some instances because it limits the quantity of information available to management, lower interpersonal conflicts, and safeguards employee privacy (Wang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2020). On the other side, this phenomenon is

widely recognized as dangerous. Employees can only perform better if they are properly managed following the nature of the work they do in the company (Kong et al., 2021). Employee actions or behaviors are sometimes noted to be based on the type of authority or assistance they receive from the organization (Jehanzeb, 2020).

Literature Review

This section dealt with the conceptual, empirical and theoretical reviews of the study variables both dependent and independent variables.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is the acceptance of the organization's values and goals as well as the willingness to put forth a significant amount of effort on its behalf. Employee commitment is a symbol of a company's loyalty (Ocen et al., 2017). Dalkrani and Dimitriadis (2018) defined employee commitment as the willingness of an employee to actively work for an organisation and continue doing so. Employee commitment is a broad concept that includes a worker's desire to remain with a company, willingness to put forth effort on its behalf, and acceptance of the company's values and objectives (Pham et al., 2019). Umukoro and Egwakhe (2020) define employee commitment as the strong desire and willingness of an employee to remain with his company despite pressure, stress, and negative outcomes. According to Krajcsák (2018), employee commitment is characterized as a person's willingness to put in a lot of effort and a strong desire to remain with the company. According to Agyeiwaah and Dayour (2021), employees are regarded as being devoted to an organisation if they voluntarily prolong their affiliation with the organisation and make a significant effort to achieve organisational goals. If there is no commitment, new initiatives and efforts risk not being implemented (Aziz, 2021). The degree to which employees identified with the organisation and its goals to maintain their membership was referred to as employee commitment.

Committed employees are a benefit to every organisation because employee commitment impacts how long employees will stay with an organisation (Uddin et al., 2018). The following are some of the most important benefits and advantages of employee commitment, it improves productivity, promotes a healthy working environment, and aids in goal achievement (Uddin, Mahmood, & Fan, 2018). They trust the organisation's aims, vision, and mission, as well as the leadership team, can be better achieved with a committed workforce. These individuals not only show great levels of productivity, but they also make sure that their coworkers and team members do as well. Absence is reduced; a devoted and motivated workforce will report far less absenteeism than their colleagues (Mahmood et al., 2019). Committed employees look forward to getting to work, doing their tasks, assisting with initiatives, and contributing to the Organisation's goals; Excellent team players; Because dedicated employees are strongly invested in the success of the company, they excel at cooperating and working in groups (AlYami et al., 2018).

Employee Silence Management

Employee silence management is the process of mitigating the negative effects of employee silence in the workplace through targeted measures (Morgan, 2017). Silence is the silent killer of innovation and change in organizations where the focus should be on risk factors and perception of risk. Risk is always associated with probabilities, which also means that not all silence is bad. Not all silence is harmful at work. Just think of a workplace where there is zero silence. What a mess that could be. Silence does and has to exist, but it must be managed. This means understanding the good, bad, and ugly aspects of silence (Sivaram, 2019). Cakici (2018), on studying the reasons for organizational silence management, concluded that the most shared reasons for choosing to remain silent are administrational and organizational reasons. In a changing world, organizations require employees who can express their ideas; employees also prefer organizations where they can express themselves because both employees and managers have high motivation and performance in an environment where silence does not exist (Knoll et al., 2021). Managers have significant obstacles in breaking down quiet cultures and creating a free environment that encourages people to speak out (Harlos, & Knoll, 2021). A quiet atmosphere may be detrimental to corporate results and vice versa.

Looking at the characteristics, employee silence is characterized by a lack of effective interactions among employees, and it contradicts the notion of organizational voice (Chou & Chang, 2020). The word organizational voice, which refers to effectively expressing one's thoughts and ideas, is considered in contrast to the phrase employee silence (Eibl et al., 2020). Employee silence happens when there is no organizational voice (Nechanska et al., 2020). In other words, if the organization's down-low connection deteriorates, the organizational voice will deteriorate as well, and employee silence will take its place (Brinsfield & Edwards, 2020). Employee silence is also described as a situation in which employees do not communicate their ideas or concerns about corporate problems with both their bosses and their co-workers (Jiang & Yao, 2020). Organizational silence results in poor job quality, which not only harms the company but also the employee (Astvik et al., 2021).

Empirical Review

Scholar Prieto and PérezSantana (2014) placed employee participation under opportunity-enhancing practices and found a positive significant relationship between these practices to management support and co-worker's support for innovative work behaviour. The authors stated further that employee participation is crucial in determining the level of work engagement. Employee participation roles are seen as important as well to assist employee engagement in the workplace. Butal and Njoroge (2018) examined the impact of employee participation on normative commitment among employees in Kenya. The findings of the study were that employee participation had a significant effect on normative commitment. It was concluded that management should encourage employees to give meaningful suggestions and participate more in decision-making as this enhances organizational performance. Measures should be put in place to increase employee participation and organizational commitment. Furthermore, Husin et

al. (2021) carried out a study on employee participation and continuance commitment: the mediation effect of work engagement. Results show that employee participation has a significant effect on normative commitment, and work engagement also has a significant effect on innovative work behaviour. Work engagement also mediates the relationship between employee participation and continuance commitment.

Various studies on communication and continuance commitment have yielded different results. Syed et al. (2019) did a study on the impact of communication on continuance commitment among employees in Saudi Arabia and found that communication had a significant impact on continuance commitment among employees. The author stated that when there is effective communication among employees it helps to create strong continuance commitment within the organization. Likewise, Baskar and Prakash (2015) examined the influence of communication on continuance commitment among employees in selected companies in India and found that there was a positive significant influence of communication on continuance commitment. In another similar study conducted by Sheeba et al. (2015) on the relationship between communication and continuance commitment among employees in a selected organization in Bangladesh and results revealed that there was a significant relationship between communication and continuance commitment.

Theoretical Review
The anchor theory for this study was the social exchange theory. The theory's strength is founded on the idea that managers need to recognize the importance of social interchange to determine the degree of commitment of workers (Mitchell & Cropanzona, 2005). This indicates that workers see the management of silence and management's trustworthiness as indicators of the personified organization's commitment to them (Whitener, 2001). Similarly, Mitchell and Cropanzona (2005) found that positive outcome exchanges would result in reciprocal reactions (Whitener, 2001). Social activity interchange occurs during bargaining (Redmond, 2015). Furthermore, during bargaining, both sides want to maximize their values. The ideal conclusion would be a win-win scenario in which both parties profit. For example, if a person is offered a position by a corporation, both sides will discuss the workers' allowances. As a result, it is undeniably true that there is some type of social interaction between them throughout a negotiation. Negotiating pay, working hours, vacation days, or the division of jobs and obligations is one example (Redmond, 2015). When academics mention relationships, they are often referring to a connection between two interacting partners (whether individuals or institutions). As previously discussed, management research has thoroughly investigated many kinds of interpersonal communication. Differences in the parties participating in the partnerships are of particular interest to social exchange theorists (Levine, Kim, & Ferrara 2010).

Methodology
The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population (6,798) of the study were the staff of the selected construction firms in Lagos State Nigeria while the research advisor's sampling table was used to get a sample size of 474. According to info

guide 2022, these companies are part of the top ten construction firms located in Lagos state Nigeria. The researcher focused on the top five construction firms as identified by this website because of their contribution to the industry and the state. The five companies the researcher looked at are Julius Berger Construction Company, Reynolds Construction Company, Arbico Construction Company Plc, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation. The questionnaire gives room for the proper collection of data to be analyzed using specialized research software. The questionnaire was divided into three which are Sections A, B, and C. Section A focused on the demographic information of the respondents, and Section B was on the independent variable of employee silence management (trust, communication, and employee participation) while section C was on the dependent variable commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment). The response structure was as follows: 6 very High (VH), Moderately High (MH), 4= High (H), 3= Moderately Low (ML), 2= Low (L), 1= Very Low (VL).

Reliability of Research Instrument
Cronbach's alpha was used for the establishment of the internal consistency reliability of the measures by evaluating a within-scale consistency of the responses to the items of the measures. Cronbach's alpha measurement deals specifically with the mutual connectedness and linkage of the items in the instrument and its expected values range between 0 and 1 (Cronbach, 1951). In this case, A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of > 0.7 but < 1 score for a construct implies that the items combined in the questionnaire layers are measuring the same construct, and the questionnaire is therefore assumed to be reliable and fit for further analysis (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2018). Furthermore, the composite reliability was evaluated as further evidence of reliability for the questionnaire of the study.

Table 1: Reliability Results

S/N	Variables	No of Items	Cronbach	Composite	Remarks
1	Employee Silence Management	4	0871	0.862	**Accepted**
2	Employee Commitment	4	0.863	0.856	**Accepted**

Source: Researchers Survey (2023)

Data Analysis and Results
The researcher distributed 500 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents of which 473 copies of the distributed questionnaire were duly filled and returned and was used for the analysis. This represents a response rate of about 94.6% of the population employed in the study, which was considered an excellent response rate according to (Cook et al., 2000).

Hypothesis: Employee silence management has no significant combined effect on the commitment of employees.

The hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression.

Table 2: Multiple Regression of employee silence management variables on Commitment of Employees of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria.

N	Model	B	Sig.	T	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R^2	F (3,469)
	(Constant)	7.737	.079	1.757				
	Trust	.596	.000	3.755				
	Communication	.808	.000	4.477				
	Employee Participation	1.230	.000	8.349	0.000^b	0.543^a	0.290	65.295
473	Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Communication, Employee Participation							
	Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment							

Source: Researcher's Findings, 2023

Interpretation

Table 2 shows the multiple regression analysis results for the components of employee silence management components on employee commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results showed that trust (β = 0.596, t = 3.755, p<0.05), communication (β = 0.808, t = 4.477, p<0.05), and employee participation (β = 1.230, t = 8.349, p<0.05) showed a positive and significant effect on employee commitment. This implies that all sub-variables of employee silence management (trust, communication, and employee participation) are important factors that determine the level of employee commitment in the construction firms sampled. The R-value of 0.543 indicates that employee silence management components have a positive relationship with employee commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The coefficient of multiple determination Adjusted R^2 = 0.290 revealed that about 29% of the variation that occurs in employee commitment of the construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria can be accounted for by the sub-variables of employee silence management while the remaining 71% changes that occurs is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model.

Also, the F-statistics (df = 3, 469) = 65.295 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05) indicates that the overall model is significant in predicting the effect of employee silence management sub-variables on employee commitment. This implies that employee silence management sub-variables have a significant effect on employee commitment of construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The predictive and prescriptive multiple regression models are thus expressed:

EC = 7.737 + 0.596TR + 0.808COM + 1.230EP+ U_i---Eqn(i) (Predictive Model)
EC = 7.737 + 0.596TR + 0.808COM + 1.230EP+ U_i---Eqn(ii) (Prescriptive Model)

Where:
 EC = Employee Commitment
 TR = Trust

COM = Communication
EP = Employee Participation
U_i = Stochastic Error Term

The regression model shows that holding employee silence management components to a constant zero, employee commitment would be 7.737 which is positive. The predictive model which is the same as the prescriptive model because all the sub-variables of employee silence management are significant showed that all the employee silence management components have a positive and significant effect on employee commitment, so the management of the company should take cognizance of all the sub-variables of employee silence management as it determines the commitment level of their employees. The results of the multiple regression analysis as seen in the model showed that when trust, communication, and employee participation improved by one unit, employee commitment would also increase by 0.596, 0.808, and 1.230 respectively, and vice-versa. This implies that an increase in trust, communication, and employee participation would increase employee commitment to selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. Also, the F-statistics (df = 3, 469) = 65.295 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05) indicates that the overall model is significant in predicting the effect of employee silence management components on employee commitment which implies that employee silence management components are important determinants in the employee commitment rate of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The result suggests that such construction firms should pay more attention to developing the components of employee silence management to increase employee commitment. Therefore, the null hypothesis four ($H_0 4$) which states that employee silence management variables have no significant combined effect on the commitment of employees was rejected.

Discussion of Findings
Based on the results of the test of hypothesis the study revealed that Employee silence management has a significant influence on the commitment of employees of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. According to the literature, this finding is consistent with other studies, both conceptually and empirically, and is consistent with the literature. Zeffane and Bani (2017) revealed that public sector employees tend to be more satisfied, more trusting, and have less intention to leave their organization. Regression analysis revealed that public sector employees' turnover intention is most significantly affected by their perceptions of the performance of their organization, with job satisfaction, work experience and education also having significant effects. In contrast, private sector employees' turnover intention was most significantly affected by job satisfaction and feelings of trust. Similarly, Mohammed and Kamalanabhan (2020) found that benevolence-based trust and competence-based trust positively influence the extent to which individuals voluntarily engage in knowledge contribution and knowledge seeking with peers. Contrary to expectations, integrity-based trust has a negative effect on knowledge-seeking behaviour at workplace. The results also provide evidence for a significant positive relationship between both types of knowledge sharing

behaviour and employees' creative performance. Butal and Njoroge (2018) examined the impact of employee participation on normative commitment among employees in Kenya. The findings of the study were that employee participation had a significant effect on normative commitment. It was concluded that management should encourage employees to give meaningful suggestions and participate more in decision-making as this enhances organizational performance. Measures should be put in place to increase employee participation and organizational commitment. Furthermore, Husin et al. (2021) carried out a study on employee participation and continuance commitment: the mediation effect of work engagement. Results show that employee participation has a significant effect on normative commitment, and work engagement also has a significant effect on innovative work behaviour. Work engagement also mediates the relationship between employee participation and continuance commitment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated the effect of employee silence management on the employee commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. Based on the empirical data, this study found that employee silence management as measured using trust, communication, and employee participation had a positive and significant effect on employee commitment in the selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The test of hypothesis revealed that trust had a significant effect on the affective commitment of selected construction firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. Future researchers can explore the role of communication channels and technology in managing employee silence and enhancing commitment. Investigate the effectiveness of different communication tools, such as social media platforms, intranet portals, or mobile applications, in facilitating open communication, reducing silence, and promoting employee commitment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. The study recommends that Construction firms should give room for employees to discuss safety and suggestions regarding the necessary requirements on the required resources and equipment that was required and not just discussing it but ensuring that this becomes a top priority for the firms as it helps employees feel heard hence leads to productivity and increase in work performance.

ii. This study recommends that construction firms promote a supportive and inclusive work environment that values diversity, respects employee well-being, and encourage work-life balance. Recognize and appreciate employee contributions, provide opportunities for career growth, and maintain open lines of communication. A positive work environment fosters employee satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment.

iii. This study recommends and encourages construction firms to actively listen to their employees' ideas, suggestions, and concerns and also demonstrate that their input is valued and acted upon when appropriate. This can be achieved through regular check-ins, employee surveys, or focus groups to gather feedback on various aspects of the organization and project management. By involving

employees in decision-making processes, you enhance their sense of ownership, engagement, and commitment.

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