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Research Article

A HYPOTHETICAL APPRAISAL OF CORPORATE CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

The concept of organizational culture spans through the range of management thinking and literature and has been one of the most enduring buzzwords of popular attention among scholars. This status also fits organizational citizenship behavior which has attracted myriad of attention ever since it surfaced in the field of management. The thrust of this paper however is to theoretically examine the nexus between these variables; drawing from extant literature. The paper critically appraised both constructs independently, associated them; and observed that organizational culture is incontrovertibly linked as having significant and positive relationship with organizational citizenship behavior. The paper drew attention of managers to the need for entrenching and nurturing cultural norms and values of the organization that are congruent with citizenship tendencies.

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INTRODUCTION

Corporate culture is postulated as one of the greatest theoretical levers required for understanding organizations. Since the early eighties, the construct of organizational culture has attracted much attention from both academics and practitioners. Evidences abound that culture dimensions vary significantly across organizations, be they captured by behavioral norms and expectations (Cooke and Rousseau, 1988), perceived practices (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders, 1990), or organizational values (Chatman and Jehn, 1994; O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991; Sheridan, 1992).

Historically, avalanche of literature addressing the meaning of corporate culture exists. Lundy & Cowling (1996) defined culture as "the way we do things around here". Similarly, Brown (1995, 1998) stated that corporate culture is the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organization's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviors of its members."

However, drawing from this behavioral aspect, we are poised to aver that culture appeals so much to organizational scientists and practitioners who have grown disillusioned with the prevailing formalistic, quantitative organizational approaches and research. The emphasis on corporate culture shifts attention away from the functional and technical aspects (the so-called *hard* side) of management that could be more readily quantified and empirically analyzed to the interpersonal and symbolic aspects (the *soft* side) of management that required in-depth, qualitative studies of organizational life.

Research also provides evidence for the role of corporate culture in predicting organizational effectiveness (Calori and Sarnin, 1991; Denison, 1984, 1990) and individual responses (Sheridan, 1992). A meaningful way to conceptualize how culture influences the behavior of employees can be found in the tenets of the congruence perspective. This perspective is based on the notion that employees adapt and adjust better to their work environment when the organization's characteristics match their personal orientations (Bretz and Judge, 1994).

Judging from the foregoing, it is arguable that culture can predict organizational citizenship behavior. By organizational citizenship behavior, we refer to what Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, (2008) described as sense of identification, involvement, and loyalty expressed by an employee towards the company. It involves three attitudes: (1) a sense of identification with organizational goals, (2) a feeling of involvement in organizational duties, and (3) a feeling of loyalty to the organization. In this paper, we shall be engaged in the theoretical discussion on interlace between corporate culture and organizational citizenship behavior.

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Concept of Corporate Culture

To reasonably understand organizational culture, one must first know what culture is. A wide range of definitions have been used for the term "culture." Examples, culture has been defined as the human-made part of the environment (Herkovits 1955), including both objective and subjective elements (Triandis 1972); as a set of reinforcements (Skinner 1981); as the collective programming of the mind (Hofstede 1991); as a shared meaning system (Shweder & LeVine 1984); as patterned ways of thinking (Kluckhohn 1954); and as unstated standard operating procedures or ways of doing things (Triandis 1994).

Although definitions of culture vary, many emphasize that culture is shared, is adaptive or has been adaptive at some point in the past, and is transmitted across time and generations (Triandis 1994). Culture operates at multiple levels of analysis, but of interest here is mainly on organizational level. In general, by studying the definitions of culture, managers should predict or grasp the general trend of employees' behaviors and thinking, because the definitions of culture deal primarily with the way they act or the way they think.

A widely accepted definition of culture provided by Schein (1984) is that it is: "*The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.*" The key feature of this theme is that culture is used as the correct way for new employees to behave, thereby, culture possess the potentials to perpetuate organizational survival and growth.

Secondly, culture is viewed as a belief system: for example, Davis (1984) defines culture as: "The pattern of shared beliefs and values that give members of an institution meaning, and provide them with the rules for behavior in their organization." Again, Hofstede (1980) described culture as "the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." Hofstede also divided culture into four layers (or four main elements): symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Far researching at the four layers is critical for organizational managers, because it can affect business or operation at different degree and in different ways. An onion diagram model of organizational culture developed by Hofstede *et al*. (1997) is presented here (Figure 1).

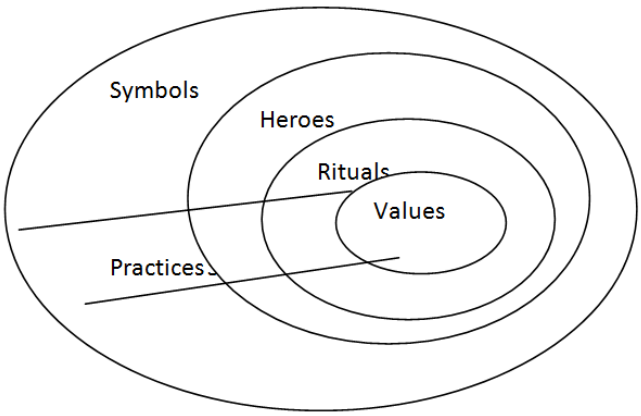

Figure 1 Onion Diagram

Source: Hofstede (1997)

As we can see, *values* form the core of culture, which are the deepest level of culture, values are intimately connected with moral and ethical codes (Brown, 1988), and determine what people think ought to be done, and identify 'likes' and 'dislikes' for both employers and employees. *Rituals* are collective activities which are considered socially essential, and *heroes* are persons who possess characteristics which are highly prized and are often the "winners" or those who get on in an organization. According to Deal and Kennedy (1982), 'the hero is a great motivator; the magician, the person everyone will count on when things get tough …' *Symbols* are the most overt element of culture and are the gestures, objects, words or acts that signify something different or wider from the others, and which have meaning for individual or group.

In a similar conceptualization, Schein developed three layers of organizational culture as reflected in figure 2.

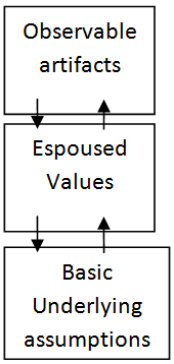

Fig 2 Layers of organizational Culture

Source: Schein E. H. organizational culture and leadership, 2nd ed (Sanfrancisco: Jossy-Bass) P. 17

These observable artifacts could be in the forms of organizational logo, trademarks, relics, special paintings and other manufactured articles. Also the espoused values represent those things the organization hold at high esteem, such as end of year ceremonies, long service awards, and pattern of relationships among organization members. These three layers eventually influence each other to build what becomes the culture of the organization. Consequently, Laudon and Laudon, (2009) posit that all organizations have bedrock, unassailable, unquestioned (by the members) assumptions that define their goals and products.

It is then perceivable to speculate that organizational culture encompasses this set of assumptions about what products the organization should produce, how it should produce them, where, and for whom. Generally, these cultural assumptions are taken for granted and are rarely publicly announced or spoken about. Business processes-the actual way business firms produce value-are usually ensconced in the organizational culture. One can see organizational culture at work by looking around the university community where part of her bedrock assumptions are that professors know more than students, and the reason students are in school is to learn, and classes follow a regular schedule.

Organizational culture is a powerful unifying force that restrains political conflicts and promotes common understanding, agreement on procedures, and common practices. When people share the same basic assumptions at workplace, agreement on other matters is more likely inevitable. Johnson and Scholes (1999) presented a cultural

web (Figure 3) so as to enable people completely understand the culture of an organization. The cultural web is actually a useful ideal tool to make links with the political, symbolic, and structural aspects of the organization, and it can be guided by the development of strategy. Generally speaking, the cultural web is useful to identify a culture within an organization. See figure 3.

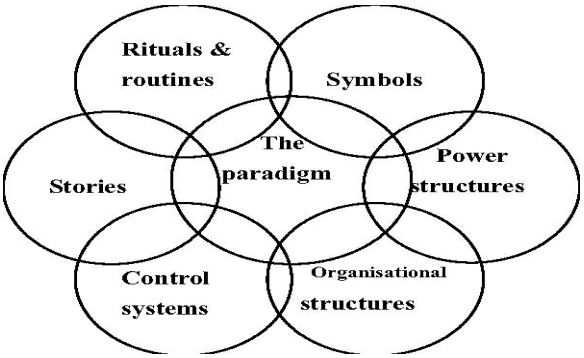

Fig 3 cultural web.

Source: Johnson and Scholes (1999), P. 74

In their three-sector study, Mohanty and Rath (2012) argued that there are seven key elements that are inter-linked in the cultural web; at the center, are the paradigm or commonly held beliefs and values of the organization, and the seven elements (routine, rituals, stories, symbols, control systems, power structures, and organizational structure) could be formed in the different developing period of an organization. In practice, these assumptions, beliefs, and values are most established by leaders of the organization and present a powerful set of forces, such as the seven key elements, which are deep, broad, and stable. They result in behaviors that serve as a guide to employees about what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior in the organization.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)

Organizational citizenship behavior has been mainly conceptualized as extra role behavior within an organization. It is a type of behavior which goes far and beyond what is minimally required in a specific job. In other words, OCB is job behavior outside the job description (Katz, 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978). According to Organ (1988: 4), OCB is discretionary behavior, not directly or explicitly recognized by formal reward system but nevertheless promotes effective functioning of an organization. Organ (1998) further described OCB as the good soldier syndrome.

An organization citizen is a good Samaritan endowed with pro social behavior.

Accordingly, the individual is fully acquainted with the reality that his behavioral pattern is not likely to yield any extrinsic rewards, yet he indulges in voluntary and non obligatory behavior. The three main characteristics of OCB are – (1) they are individual's free choice to engage in informal work. By implication, neither reward, nor punishment is associated with its exhibition or non exhibition; but in reality, it has the tendency of creating positive impression about an employee who exhibits it to his boss and such impression can influence the employee's appraisal eventually(see Marckenzie *et al* 1991). (2) They are beneficial to the organization. Even though they are sometimes directed at individuals; example, Anderson and Williams' (1991) OCBI-that is OCB directed at individual, its ultimate beneficiary is the organization, and (3) they are multidimensional (Cohen and Kol, 2004).

To describe Organizational citizenship behavior, Organ (1988) identified the following five dimensions:

- ***Altruism:*** this refers to helping behaviors aimed at specific individuals; particularly when the help is job related. Example is giving assistant to a new hire on how to use his office facilities.
- ***Conscientiousness:*** Conscientiousness refers to impersonal behavior that benefits the organization as a whole. In other words, it refers to behavior that is not directed at another individual. Examples of conscientiousness include an employee adhering to an organization's rules and regulations or an employee not using all of their vacation or sick days.
- ***Sportsmanship:*** Sportsmanship is an employee's willingness to deal with poor situations without complaining. It is the only form of OCB that involves declining to participate in certain behaviors. For example, not engaging in gossip and not complaining about office size would be considered good sportsmanship.
- ***Courtesy:*** Courtesy is demonstrated by preventing organization problems through communication and general consideration for others. An example of courtesy involves letting co-workers know how they can reach an employee who is on vacation. The courteous behaviors attempt to prevent other employees from encountering unpleasant surprises.
- ***Civic Virtue:*** Civic virtue is participating in the life and culture of the organization; this is not considered behavior that is targeted at individuals, rather, this behavior targets the organization. An example of civic virtue would be attending company events, such as meetings or picnics, which are not required for employees. It also includes contributing opinions on important organizational issues.

Organizations that employ individuals who exhibit Organizational Citizenship Behaviors are more likely to have effective work groups within the organization (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & Mackenzie, 1997). Empirical studies on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors have been conducted in various industries, including sales (Mackenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter, 1993; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994), education (Somech *et.al*, 2004), communications, Podsakoff *et.al* 1990), and banking (Wheatley, 2002).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior research has also expanded across the globe, with studies being conducted in organizations in countries other than the United States. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors have been studied in organizations in Canada (Latham & Skarlicki, 1996), Taiwan (Farh, *et al*. 1990), China (Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004), and Israel (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2004). (Chhokar, Zhuplev, Fok, and Hartman 2004) conducted a study on Organizational Citizenship Behavior that expanded across the boundaries of five different countries. They examined Organizational Citizenship Behavior in France, Britain, India, Russia, and the United States and found that in all there has been an impact of Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Corporate culture and organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational culture has long been regarded as a critical determinant of an organization's effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1992; Ouchi, 1983). Some exceptions have emerged, including influential work by Kotter and Heskett (1992), who found a correlation between indices of "strong" culture (e.g., clearly identifiable, consistent values) and long-term organizational performance. Moreover, research by Denison and his colleagues Denison & Mishra (1995) has afforded great insight and has demonstrated empirical ties between culture and organizational performance in various contexts, using an array of performance criteria. Many researchers have identified relationships between organizational culture, organizational performance and change (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Ouchi, 1983).

Researchers have also argued that improving, maintaining or changing organization culture assists in making organizations more competitive and in helping revitalize declining organizations; still, despite this potential importance, organizational culture is still a very controversial area of study among organizational researchers (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991). Culture has been historically molded (Hofstede *et al*., 1990) and deeply ingrained in an organization and as a result is difficult to change (Atchison, 2002; Drucker, 1995; Hofstede *et al*., 1990; Narine & Persaud, 2003; Taylor, 2003).

Culture influences the communication skills and decision-making processes of the organization's members and affects its credibility (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Kowalezyk & Pawlish, 2002; Mycek, 2000). Organizational culture also shapes the organization's level of socialization and learning (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). Kowalczyk & Pawlish (2002) correlated the importance of culture to an organization's competitive advantage, adaptability, and level of innovation. It has been further noted that the culture of an organization may affect organizational system operations, productivity, leadership actions (Shaw, 2002; Taylor, 2003), performance (Cameron & Quinn, 1999), and organizational effectiveness (Parry, 2004; Valentino *et al*., 2004).

Consequently, it is worthy of note that the role of organizational culture is crucial to understanding individual and organizational behavior. According to Wagner (1995), organizational culture has a strong influence on employees' behavior and attitudes. Organizational culture involves standards and norms that prescribe how employees should behave in any given organization (Martins & Martins 2003). Managers and employees do not therefore behave in a value-free vacuum; they are governed, directed and tempered by the organization's culture (Brown 1998). Employees' behavior includes their commitment to their respective organizations. Given the dynamics of culture and human behavior, it is important to study how employees commit themselves to their organization by extending their role performance to include non prescribed actions.

As noted by Paine and Organ (2000), cultural context may influence the applicability of Organizational Citizenship Behavior in a variety of ways. According to the findings of Mohanty and Rath, (2012), all dimension of culture studied : Belief & Norms, Individual Autonomy , Individual responsibility , Conflict Tolerance , Structure and Risk Tolerance were found to correlate with those of organizational citizenship behavior. However, the conceptions of what constitutes citizenship behavior vary across national cultures. Lam *et al*. (1999) found that a five-factor structure of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs)—altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, courtesy, and sportsmanship—was replicated in Japan, Australia, and Hong Kong. However, Japanese and Hong Kong employees were more likely to define some categories of OCBs (e.g., courtesy, sportsmanship) as part of "in-role" performance as compared with Australian and U.S. employees.

Similarly, Farh *et al*. (1997) developed an indigenous OCB measure in Taiwan and found that although altruism, conscientiousness, and identification qualified as etic dimensions of OCB, sportsmanship and courtesy were not found to be part of the OCB construct in the Taiwanese sample. There were also emic dimensions, such as interpersonal harmony and protecting company resources that were not previously identified in the West. Antecedents of OCBs also vary across cultures.

These variations associated with organizational citizenship behavior of people with different cultural background could be explained by Hofstede's (1984) observation that individualistic cultures are characterized by loosely knit social structures in which people are responsible for taking themselves and their families only. In contrast, collectivist cultures are characterized by tight social structures in which people distinguish between in–groups and out–groups and expect their in-group to be responsible for looking after them in exchange for their absolute loyalty to the in- group.

Drawing from the afore-noted observations, it can be thinkable to suggest that the cultural orientation in Nigeria presents some implications for the organizations that do business in the Nigeria milieu. Nigeria is predominantly a collectivist society where injury to one is more often than not perceived as injury to all. With such orientation as basis of national character, it becomes easy for employees to engage in citizenship behavior, after all, being nice, helping others and looking cheerful even in bad times are parts of the national life of typical Nigerians, and the workplace is no exception.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS

Being that Nigeria is a collectivist society where people are concerned about the wellbeing of their fellow; it is only thinkable that there will be that tendency to exhibit behaviors that are of citizenship coloration. It is important to note that organizational culture per se is largely drawn from national culture. Therefore, employees in Nigerian organizations may have the tendency of carrying their national lifestyle to the workplace and a collection of those eventually metamorphose in organizations culture. It is important to remark that culture if nurtured can inculcate citizenship behaviors in employees within the Organization. It can hence be speculated that strengthening the cultural roots of an Organization can lead to observance of citizenship behavior across all sectors in a given organization.

Conversely too, if individuals bring with them a predisposition to perform citizenship behaviors in a culture not prepared to absorb the discretionary behaviors, such tendency can tantamount in nothingness because other members of the organization might misinterpret the individual's actions to be

either mere impression management mechanism or total eye service that is intended to attract positive perceptions of the fellow. Hence, judging from the ensuing discourse, it is suggestible that one of the most significant predictors of employee citizenship is the culture. Also, considering the positive contributions arising from employees' exhibition of citizenship behavior (see Organ, 1988 and Podsakoff, *et al*, 2000), It will be to the organizations advantage to have employees exhibit citizenship behavior; hence the need for organizations to build strong cultures.

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