
Employees' Commitment: The Influence of Managerial Humor Practices

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Abstract: *Employee commitment has become one of the most desired employee's work outcome by managers of all organization due to the essential role it plays in ensuring organization's goal and objectives are attained. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between humor practices and employee commitment of deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted using questionnaire as the research instrument which was distributed to 285 employees of deposit money banks in Rivers State. The generated data were analyzed through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-statistics in order to ascertain the relationship between the variables of the study with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 within a significance level of 0.05. The findings showed a significant and positive relationship between humor practices and employee commitment of deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria, hence we recommended among others that managers of DMBs in Rivers State should use humor in situations that permits such freedom to increase the commitment of their employee.*

Keywords: *Humor Practices; Managers; Employee Commitment*

Introduction

To achieve long term success in today's extraordinary and exceptional wave of change, managers of Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) must by all means turn this turbulent environment to an opportunity rather than a threat through their human resources outcome. Hence, Raiden and Dainty (2006) expressed that the changing requirements in the day to day operations of organizations require the formation of capable human resource which depends on the nature, dynamic and uncertainty of the work. Among all the resources possessed by an organization, the human resources are one of the most important and their work outcome in ensuring competitive advantage as well as organizational success is of enormous importance. In other words, employees are the key asset and differentiator for any organizations be it public or private. This is because the human resources provide matchless, valuable and explicit services to the organization which have qualify them to be a source of competitive advantage (Kazlauskait & Buciunien, 2008), thus lack of commitment of these important resources has many consequences for organizations including DMBs. The committed employee submerged his own identity for the good of the organization (Mowday, Richard, Steer & Porter, 1979). The commitment of the employee is very essential since all other behaviours that can be exhibited by the employee both negative and positive behaviours (positive behaviours such as organizational citizenship behaviour, high level performance, enhanced productivity or negative behaviours such as absenteeism, turnover intentions) are predicted by the level of the employee's commitment

(Biljana, 2004). Therefore, managers must endeavour to adopt effective approach to ensuring that employee commitment are enhanced through appropriate strategy such as humor practices. Humor practices appropriately adopted and applied is very essential in providing an atmosphere or climate of excitement that provide relieves from stress and pain to the employees. This is because humor has the ability to invoke laughter in an individual that makes him or her excited. Milne (2007) noted that if managers applied humor in the organization, employees will be passionate about what they do, happier and more productive. They will in turn infect customers and co-workers with their positive attitude and stay longer with the organization. Humor practices is associated with improving morale among workers, creating a more positive organizational culture, enhancing group cohesiveness, stimulating individual and group creativity, and increasing motivation towards better commitment. A good sense and appropriate use of humor is very significant for efficient and effective management when combine with skills like human skills, conceptual skills and good speaking ability. As a valuable communication tool, humor can serve and be of great benefit to organizational manager. Decker and Rotondo (2001) opined that humor is relevant for explaining job tasks, assist in energizing and propelling behaviour, boosting innovation as well as helps to positively grease the interactions between employees and managers.

Furthermore, due to the importance of employee commitment, lots of scholars have studied the concept with other variables in bid to enhancing it, such as Mathieu and Zajac (1990) who studied personal features and employee commitment. In their result it was found that personal characteristic such as age, length of service has positive relationship with employee commitment. Also, John and Lenn (2001) opined that marital status has positive relationship with employee commitment. Glisson and Durick (1988) observed that employee's level of education has inverse relationship with commitment. Similarly, Gaertner and Nollen (1989) looked at commitment from the area of security of job, training and promotion as well as mentoring. They found that the more the above factors are provided and improved the more employee commitment would be enhanced. More so, in the aspect of organization's environment attributes associated with employee commitment include organizational structure, organizational climate, and human resource processes (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), role conflict and ambiguity (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). Furthermore, though it is commonly assumed that a manager's application of humor practices might have a significant influence on employee commitment, moderately inconsiderable empirical proof has been accumulated that plainly back up this assertion according to Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2012). Thus, the study looks forward to studying the relationship between managerial humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State. The adopted research questions for the study is: what is the relationship between managerial humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria while the hypothesis to be tested in the course of the study is stated in the null form: there is no significant relationship between managerial humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted relief story as its theoretical framework. The relief theory shows how people experience humor and laugh because they observed that stress has been minimized in a certain way (Berlyne, 1972). The theory holds that humor stems from the relief experienced when tensions are engendered and removed from an individual. Also, Lorenz (1996) observed that jokes provoke laughter by building up a pressure to laugh which is then suddenly and

unexpectedly exploded. Freud (1991) comment that, for instance, the sad feeling an individual gets that prevents him or her from insulting someone directly can be overcome if that insult is logically done in the form of a joke which can serve as a source of pleasure to the individual. Humor helps to convert aggression and control it, while at the same time permitting its expression (Coser, 1960). Thus, the application of humor generates feeling of excitement in the organization which can provide and enhance the commitment of the employees.

Concept of Humor

Humor is an entertaining way of communicating with others that result in positive feeling and cognitions. Humor is multi-dimensional concept which consist of self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor and aggressive humor practices which can be positive or negative depending on the way it is communicated (Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2012). There is likelihood that a said joke can have positive effect on one side and negative effect on the other side. It can be used to build mutual trust and friendship among people; it thus serves as a toolkit that can be used by management in the organization. Humor practices is often considered as an informal means of communicating unserious message; however, there is truly a science to the application of humor, which can be use adequately as a means for managing employees in the organizations. Managers of organizations are admonished to welcome humor practices as a unique means of communication since it provides environment of excitement in the organization (Collinson, 2002). In nowadays global environment, people sees laughter as a means of managing life's issues (Ziv, 1988). Adage or saying like a good laughter daily prolong life and laughter is the best medicine reflects the importance of laughter to people. More so, laughter is more than that because it can assist interaction between employees. Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap (1990) also observed that humor should not be used anyhow and at any time; however the individual using it should know when to be funny in order to avoid the accusation of not being in appreciation of other people's value. Hence, humor should be based on the situation at hand. In the same vein, Newstrom (2002) observed that there should be a particular times and situations, managers should have some fun with his/her subordinates or peers. In the same vein, Barsoux (1996) suggested three suitable situations vis-à-vis the following:

Sword: it is the action aspect of humor which involves the persuasion of others to accept their view points. It gives the employee the leeway to say the things which otherwise could not have been said without invoking conflict in the organization.

Shield: it is the defensive aspect of humor which focused or provides ease against the negative effects of humor and enable employees and various groups to contend periods of distress.

Values: it is the aspect of humor that makes employees to adjust to a specific pattern and strengthen the values of the organization.

Furthermore, Watson (2006) opined that humor is an important aspect of daily activities in the organization which make employees to be excited and laugh in order to forget things that bother them. Hence, humor is a generally agreed phenomenon in the organization and without it individual will no more be people. It holds that humor in the organization is an inevitable requirement and the capability to be successful in the organization depends on how well managers learn to choose exciting behaviour.

Concept of Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and wants to continue actively participating in it (Newstrom & Davies, 2002). A committed employee is an employee who stays with an organization, goes to work early and regularly,

protects and guide organizational assets, and also has fate in the goals of the organization. Employees in today's organization have become so aware of their value to their managers and they would intentionally work for the organization that can satisfy their expectations. Hence, an organization that shows that they are committed to their employees will certainly draw and retain them (Madigan, Norton & Testa, 1999). Employees commitment is very important to the organization and the achievement of its goals, thus it must be taken seriously by managers. Employee commitment develops in different stages and according to Mullins (1999), it has three stages which are as follows:

Compliance: which involves a situation where an employee stays with an organization just to get a kind of benefit, such as pay.

Identification: this involves the employee accepting influence of the organization so as to maintain a satisfying relationship and to be proud of belonging to the organization.

Internalization: in this stage the employee finds the values of the organization to be intrinsically rewarding and compatible with his or her personal values.

In similar vein Martin and Nicholls (1987) coined a model of commitment on three pillars, which are:

A sense of belonging to the organization: it focuses on the loyalty of the employee that is important to the success of the organization. The desired to belong to an organization should be built by managers by making sure the employees are properly informed and involved in the goals and values of the firm.

A sense of excitement in the job: unless workers are excited about their work, they will not be motivated to carry out their assigned task effectively.

Confidence in management: it refers to the ability to belong and to be excited in the organization which can be truncated if employees do not have regards for the management in the organization.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational vis-à-vis cross sectional survey research design which examines the relationship between managerial humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted questionnaire as the research instrument which consist of four respond choices for each variable with 5 Point Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 indicating strongly disagree, disagree, indifference, agree and strongly agree respectively. Face and content validity was also used for the validity of the research instrument while the reliability of the research instrument indicates a Cronbach Alpha value higher than 0.7; specifically the values for managerial humor practices = 0.917 while that of employee commitment= 0.985. The independent variable is managerial humor practice and it was used as a uni-dimensional variable while the dependent variable is employee commitment which was also used as single variable without measures. The population of the study comprised of 1027 employees of Head office Branches of 17 Deposit Money Banks operating in Rivers State with sample size of 285 derived using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination. The study also adopted simple random sampling technique. Furthermore, out of the 285 questionnaires distributed; 254 representing 89.12% were retrieved while the other 31 (10.88%) questionnaire were not retrieved. Also, 22 of the retrieved questionnaire representing 8.66% were discarded because they were not filled properly. Hence, 232 (91.34%) of the questionnaire retrieved were useful, it therefore served as the basis for analysis in this study. The data derived were analyzed through the use of Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics to test the relationship between the

variables of the study through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 within a significance level of 0.05.

Data Analysis and Results

The Strength of the Relationship between Managerial Humor Practices and Employee Commitment

Table 1: Correlations analysis showing the relationship between Managerial Humor Practices and Employee Commitment

		Correlations	
		Managerial Humor Practices	Employee Commitment
Managerial Humor Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	232	232
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.961**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	232	232

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Result, version 22.0

Table 1 above shows that the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is = 0.961. This means that a very strong and positive relationship exists between managerial humor practices and employee commitment. In other words, direct relationship exist between the variables and further improvement in managerial humor practices will result in better employee commitment. The relationship is further tested applying t-statistics as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: *effects of managerial humor practices on employee commitment.*

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 230)	R	R ²	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 1, 231)	sig f
Constant	16.128	24.466	0.000						
MHP	0.724	19.540	0.000	1.96	0.961	0.923	2760.48	3.92	0.000

Dependent Variable; Employee Commitment

Source: SPSS Result, version 22.0

Table 2 above reveals that the coefficient of correlation is 0.961. This shows that significant and very strong relationship exists between managerial humor practices and employee commitment because r is closer to one (1). Also, the Coefficient of Determination (R²) = 0.923 which implies that 92.3% variation in employee commitment is explained by variations in managerial humor practices. This implies that the above stated model has a good fit (explanation is > 50%). Therefore the remaining 7.7% is explained by some other variables not covered in this study model. The F-calculated of 2760.48 had a corresponding significant t-value of 0.000. Therefore,

it concludes a good and useful model. Conventionally $F\text{-Cal} = 2760.48 > F\text{-tab}_{(0.05, 1, 231)} = 3.92$ hence the decision of a useful model is upheld. Also, managerial humor practices had a calculated t-value of 19.540 and a corresponding Probability Value (PV) of 0.000. Hence, since the $t\text{-calculated} = 19.540 > t\text{-tabulated}_{(0.05, 231)} = 1.96$; then the null hypothesis is rejected, hence there is significant relationship between managerial humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State.

Discussion of Finding

From our findings, it is statistically obvious that managerial humor practices has positive and direct effect on employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. In other words, managerial humor practice is important for effective and efficient management and gratification of subordinates. Thus, Ford, McLaughlin and Newstrom (2003) observed that managerial humor practices brings better pliability in the organization and warrant enhanced employee commitment rates. More so, in the words of Burford (1987), managers' application of humor has strong relationship with employee loyalty and satisfaction. To further buttress our finding, Decker (1987) expressed that employees who considered their managers high in the application of humor, records greater job commitment. Also Cooper (2008) observed that proper usage of humor act as an armament against stress by helping individual employee to feel at ease from tensions that develops due to job challenges which is an important tool for communication and has effect on employees' commitment and organizational group's behaviour. According to Kjerful (2007) happiness at work is the ultimate productivity booster. This is due to the fact that happy people work better with others, are more creative, fix problems instead of complaining, are more optimistic, are considerably more motivated, get sick less, learn faster, worry less about making mistakes and make better decisions which make them to be more committed to their organizations. Romero and Cruthirds (2006) affirm that managers' application of humor can be apply to attain organizational outcomes such as stress reduction, enhancing group cohesiveness, improvement in organizational communication, encouraging creativity and developing culture of happiness that brings about commitment. Furthermore, Cooper (2008) suggested that humor can be a type of ingratiation behaviour that can bring about a favourable mood required for employee commitment. Christopher and Yan (2005) opined that it can also assist to develop relationship between employees in the organization which affect organizational commitment. In his study Collinson (2002) observed that humor releases tension and aggression. Also, humor is effective in bringing group cohesiveness and serves as social lubricant among team members by building a sense of community (Cruthirds & Romero, 2006). This make the employees to be excited about their work and make them more committed to the organization.

On the contrary, Avolio, Howell and Sosik (1999) observed that application of humor in organizational contexts can be hypothesized to have both positive and negative effects on individual and unit commitment. Humor used adequately can act both as a form of social lubrication and as a productivity booster, while also being extremely contagious (Garvin & Mason, 2004). What is common with negative humor practices is that it may distract employee from work and sometimes result in physical conflict. Thus, negative aspect of humor in an organization can cause emotional harm to other employees (Juni & Katz, 2001). When humor is used negatively and interpreted by employee as harassment, can lead to lawsuits, reduction in productivity and might subsequently induce employee turnover (Mueller, DeCoster & Estes, 2002). However, the chance of annoying somebody is depended and increases with organizational diversity (Quinn, 2000). If applied wrongly or in a reckless way managerial humor practices outcome could be disastrous which can crush down relationships that have been

built over time. Also, while humor practices might seem good enough on a personal level, it can make employees to disregard quality or safety ethics which can lead to conflict within the organization. There is certainty that sooner or later, consistent usage of humor in a negative form might certainly annoy the target. Though managerial humor practices play important role in enhancing employee commitment, managers must be very careful with how it is used in the organization.

Conclusion

From the data analyzed, we therefore conclude that managerial humor practices has positive and significant impact on employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. This is because, humor application plays a positive and significant role to ensuring organizational work are more enjoyable. Hence, for organizations to achieve commitment of their employee, a proactive and strategic application of humor is therefore needed. It is obvious from this research work that the application of humor will help both organizations and manager due to the important part it plays in influencing both the mood of employees, communication channels and commitment. More so, it is not what is been said that matters but how it is been said. For instance referring to a co-employee as a clown can be a compliment; however it can be seen as an insult in another scenario. Therefore, managers must be careful on how they apply humor; thus they must use it appropriately and sensibly, so as to maximize its effectiveness without been interpreted negatively. This is because, humor used adequately can act both as a form of social lubrication and as a productivity booster, while it might also result to conflict. We therefore recommend that:

1. Managers of DMBs in Rivers State should use humor at situations that permits such freedom to increase the commitment of their employee.
2. Also, managers of DMBs in Rivers State should provide enabling environment that encourages the use of positive and appropriate humor practices in order to develop and enhance employees' commitment.

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