Strategic Leadership Styles and Employee Engagement in the Telecommunication Sector of Ghana

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Abstract
This paper investigates leadership styles and their effect on employee engagement. The study was a cross-sectional. Data were collected from employees in the telecommunications sector of Ghana. A sample size 200 employees was used. Multiple regression was the main statistical tool employed to achieve the study objects. It was established that individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation have positive effect and correlation with employee engagement except idealized influence that has an insignificant relationship. Contingent rewards and passive management by exception showed positive effect on engagement, except active management by exception that has an insignificant relationship. On the whole, leadership style was found to be a significant determinant of employee engagement.
Keywords: transactional leadership style, transformational leadership style, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence ,contingent rewards, passive management by exception, active management by exception, employee engagement, mobile telecommunications industry, Ghana.

1.0. Introduction

Effective leadership and employee engagement are two factors that have been regarded as fundamental for organisational success. A capable leader provides direction for the organisation and inspires followers towards achieving desired goals. In a similar vein, employees who are highly engaged are likely to exert more effort in their assigned tasks and pursue organisational interests (Chen & Silversthorne, 2005). Several studies have examined the relationship between these two factors and concurred that the style of leadership within an organisation has significant effects on organisational commitment and employee engagement. These studies also indicate that employee engagement in the public sector is just as important as it is in the private sector. (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Mosadegh & Yarmohammadian, 2006). According to Kahn (2002), "employee engagement refers to the harnessing of organisational members to their work roles" (p. 694). Kahn (2002) further pointed out that one's engagement to an organisation is influenced by many organisational contextual factors, ranging from salaries, job autonomy, job security, workplace flexibility, to leadership. In particular, leaders within organisations can adopt appropriate leadership styles to affect employee engagement.

The importance of leadership and employee engagement at work in contemporary times cannot be deemphasized in this highly dynamic and complex business environment where the human beings are seen as the organisation's most valued asset and a major tool for competitive advantage (Mosadegh & Yarmohammadian, 2006). Also, the telecommunication industry of Ghana is a major force that drives the economy and contributes a great deal to the development of the economy as a whole. However, not much research efforts have been geared towards this sector (Baah, 2011).

It is in this vein that the present study seeks to examine the effect between leadership styles and employee engagement in the telecommunication sector of Ghana.

2.0. Study Objectives

In line with the above mentioned problems, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To measure the effects of idealized, inspirational, individualized and intellectual leadership styles on employee engagement.
- To measure the effects of contingent and management leadership styles on employee engagement.
- To measure the effects of laissez faire leadership style on employee engagement.

3.0. Review of Relevant Literature

Leadership is viewed as a process of interaction between leaders and followers where the leader attempts to influence followers to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010). Previous studies on have identified different types of leadership styles. Among the more prominent leadership styles are Burns' (1978) transactional and transformational leadership styles. Transformational leadership emphasises followers' intrinsic motivation and personal development and seek to align followers' aspirations and needs with desired organisational outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In contrast, transactional leadership gains legitimacy through the use of rewards, praises and promises that would satisfy followers' immediate needs (Northouse, 2010). Avolio, Bass and Jung (1997)

identified four dimensions of transformational leadership as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Idealised influence is concerned with the formulation and articulation of vision and challenging goals and motivating followers to work beyond their self-interest in order to achieve common goals (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004). Inspirational motivation refers to the way leaders motivate and inspire their followers to commit to the vision of the organisation through fostering team spirit (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Intellectual stimulation is concerned with the role of leaders in stimulating innovation and creativity in their followers by questioning assumptions and approaching old situations in new ways (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Avolio (1995) also proposed that transactional leadership consists of three dimensions, namely contingent rewards, management by exception (active) and management by exception (passive). Contingent reward refers to leaders clarifying the work that must be achieved and use rewards in exchange for good performance. Management by exception (passive) refers to leaders intervening only when problem arise whereas management by exception (active) refers to leaders actively monitoring the work of followers and making sure that set standards are met (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Also Foster (2002), identified the laissez-faire leadership style in addition to authoritarian and democratic leadership styles. Laissez faire leadership is where all the rights and power to make decisions is fully given to the worker (Foster, 2002).

Organisations in contemporary times also need energetic and dedicated employees: people who are engaged with their work as initiative and responsibility for personal development as expected from their employees (Kahn, 2002). According to this approach, work engagement is defined as a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; dedication is characterised by being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge; and absorption is characterised by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Kahn, 2002).

4.0. Method

Data were collected through the use of closed ended survey questionnaires from employees working in the six mobile telecommunication organizations in Accra, Ghana – MTN, Vodafone, Glo, Airtel, Expresso and Tigo. Since these organisations have branches in dispersed areas of the country, employees from selected branches of the various organizations were used for data collection. The respondents included employees at different levels in the various companies. However, the category of employees in the sanitation and grounds department of the various companies was excluded from the study. This is because the researchers believed that such category of employees would lack the level of literacy required to comprehend the issues raised on the questionnaires and as such would not be able to make meaningful contributions to the study.

A sample size of 200 respondents was chosen from selected branches of the various mobile telecommunication companies in Accra, Ghana using the multistage sampling technique. The convenience sampling method was first used to select the various branches of the organizations under study. In order to ensure that approximately equal number of respondents was selected from the various organizations, the proportional random sampling was used.

The research instrument was divided into four sections. Section 1 consisted of 4 items measuring the demographic characteristics of respondents. Sections 2, 3 and 4 consisted of 31 items measuring the different dimensions of leadership styles and employee engagement respectively. All items were measured on a 5 - point likert scale (ranging from 1 – strongly disagreed to 5 – strongly agreed). Data were analysed using SPSS. The technique for data analyses was multiple regression.

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.266	.946		1.337	.206
	Idealised	-.128	.204	-.167	-.627	.542
	Management	-.253	.158	-.382	-1.605	.034
	Intellectual	.239	.148	.381	1.620	.000
	Individualised	-.009	.162	-.016	-.057	.956
	Contingent	.148	.073	.258	.858	.001
	Inspirational	.286	.331	.230	.863	.002
	Laissez	.248	.233	.241	1.061	.010

F = 1.768   R = .713 R Square = .508   Adjusted R Square = .221

The model above shows that 50.8% of the variations in employee engagement can be attributed to the style of leadership in the company (R Square = .508). Also an R value of .713 shows that there exists a very strong relationship between the dependent variable (employee engagement) and independent variables (leadership styles).

The results therefore show that positive effects exist between employee engagement and Contingent, Inspirational, Laissez and Intellectual styles of leadership. This is represented by the beta values of .258, .230, .241 and .381 respectively. Individualised, Idealised and Management styles of leadership affects employee engagement negatively (β = -.016, -.382 and -.167 respectively). It should however be noted that the estimates of idealized and individualized styles of leadership are not significant at 95% confidence interval (p > 0.05) whilst the other leadership styles are significant at 95% confidence interval (p < 0.05).

5.0. Conclusions and Recommendations
The following conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the study:
- The style of leadership adopted in an organisation affects the extent of employee engagement; hence managers should employ appropriate and desired styles of leadership in order to engage their workforce.
- The estimates of idealized and individualized styles of leadership are not significant; hence they are not reliable predictors of employee engagement.
- Management leadership style influences employee engagement in the mobile telecommunication sector of Ghana; hence it is essential for management to develop appropriate styles of leadership.
- Contingent, Inspirational, laissez faire and intellectual styles of leadership significantly enhance employee engagement, hence the extent of these leadership styles should be increased.
- Intellectual leadership style has the greatest effect on employee engagement and therefore it should be greatly enhanced.

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