

SOCIAL AWARENESS AND PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT OF DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN RIVERS STATE

Edum, Christian Clifford (PhD)

Department Of Business Administration/Tourism

And Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Otuoke

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of manager social-awareness on perceived organisational support of deposit money banks in Rivers State. The paper revealed that manager social-awareness influences perceived organisational support of the deposit money banks in Rivers State. Conclusively, the study affirmed that adoption and development of self-awareness by managers of banks will contribute substantially towards enhanced or positive organisational climate. It was recommended, among other things, that bank managers endeavor to improve in their self-awareness to facilitate a positive climate where employees feel valued, receive essential support and get emotionally and psychologically energised to contribute their best towards the attainment of desired organisational outcomes.

Keywords: *Social-awareness, Perceived Support, Emotional Intelligence, Organisational Climate*

INTRODUCTION

Management scholars, for decades, have recommended that executives follow Weber's advice to keep emotions out of the work place and to practice what Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) referred to as "administrative rationality" (Humphrey *et al.*, 2008). That is because, even among philosophers, the pursuit of reason had an elevated status to that of emotion, which only lurks at the background, referring to it as a threat to reason (Solomon, 2008). The consideration of the place of emotion was thus inconsequential and played an inferior role. Solomon (2008: 3) states that 'one of the most enduring metaphors of reason and emotion has been the metaphor of master and slave, with the wisdom of reason firmly in control and the dangerous impulses of emotion safely suppressed, channeled, or (ideally) in harmony with reason.' Stressing on the inferiority of emotions, he further states, 'there is the inferior role of emotion - the idea that emotion is as such more primitive, less intelligent, more bestial, less dependable, and more dangerous than reason, and thus needs to be controlled by reason. Consequently, Küpers and Weibler (2005) observed that emotional dimensions became neglected topics in organisational studies and in economic research in general (Küpers & Weibler, 2008).

In keeping emotions out of the work place at the time, Psychologists and organisational managers gave no considerations to feelings of individuals, even workers in the organisation. In this stance, they missed on the information emotions provide. Clore (1994) argues that the primary function of emotion is to provide information. That is in line with Goleman's (2005) assertion that emotions are impulses to act. Drawing from his argument, Clore (1994:104) posits that 'emotion supply information through distinctive facial and vocal expressions and to oneself through distinctive thoughts and feelings'. He, therefore, contends that whether 'the experience of emotion is functional and dysfunctional depends on what it does to the information value of the accompanying affective experience'. Therefore, whether psychologists and, or, organisational managers paid no attention to emotions did not stop emotional events from occurring, nor did it stop the accompanying 'private affective experience' (Clore, 1994) in the individual worker.

Social awareness is the first of the external dimensions of Emotional Intelligence as proposed by Goleman (2001) and defines it as the ability to sense, understand and react to others emotions while comprehending social networks. In the organisation, it enables one to recognize, understand and respond to the needs of others, while at the same time observant of the organisational networks towards building positive relationships. According to Bradberry & Greaves (2009), social awareness is the ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them. They emphasize that it means perceiving what other people are thinking and feeling even if one does not feel the same way, and, as Zimmerman (n.d.) adds, 'even though their perspective and their experiences might be quite different than yours, you are aware of the other person's feelings, needs and concerns'. Again, social awareness involves being aware of how the organisation one works affects them, including being able to read the emotional environment and power relationship at play (Team FME, 2014)

Since Likert (1967), Litwin & Stringer (1968), Stringer (2002), Goleman (2002), Ayers (2005), Momeni (2009) and Maamari & Majdalani (2017) are in agreement that influencing organisational climate is believed to be a function of leadership, and that it is the emotional intelligence of the leader that influences employees' perception, morale, emotions, and behaviours (organisational climate), it is important to study the influence of manager's emotional intelligence on organisational climate. This is essentially because, as observed by Drucker (1986:3), 'the manager is the dynamic life-giving element in every business. Without his *leadership* (italics mine) the "resources of production" remain resources and never production' - and the human resource is the most important of the resource of production (UK Essays, 2018). Drucker (1986:3) further argues that 'the quality and performance of managers determine the success of the business, and indeed, determine its survival'. This work, therefore, focuses on the manager social awareness and perceived organizational support they create in deposit money banks in River State.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to ascertain the relationship between social-awareness and perceived organisational support of deposit money banks in Rivers State

Social Awareness

Social awareness is the first of the external dimensions of Emotional Intelligence as proposed by Goleman (2001) and defines it as the ability to sense, understand and react to others emotions while comprehending social networks. In the organisation, it enables one to recognize, understand and respond to the needs of others, while at the same time observant of the organisational networks towards building positive relationships. According to Bradberry & Greaves (2009), social awareness is the ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them. They emphasize that it means perceiving what other people are thinking and feeling even if one does not feel the same way, and, as Zimmerman (n.d.) adds, 'even though their perspective and their experiences might be quite different than yours, you are aware of the other person's feelings, needs and concerns'. Again, social awareness involves being aware of how the organisation one works affects them, including being able to read the emotional environment and power relationship at play (Team FME, 2014)

A socially aware person can accurately read situations and people because he is able to understand and empathize with their emotions. Since management is about getting work done and achieving objectives through other people, a manager with poor or no understanding of others cannot relate with his direct reports or subordinates and will certainly have difficulties

being successful in this role. Social awareness enables a manager to stay focused and absorb critical information (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to FME (n.d) a manager is incentivized to get results and achieve end goals, 'so anything you can do to attain this effectively and productively is good. So whilst some may view spending time empathizing with others as contradictory to attaining goals, it is central to a manager's role of creating a motivated, cohesive, and effective team'. It really takes good listeners, relationship builders and discernment to be a socially aware manager. The competencies associated with social-awareness are empathy, service orientation and organisational awareness.

Empathy is one of the hallmarks of emotional intelligence (Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002; Stein, 2009; Zeidner *et al.*, 2009) and has captured the current zeitgeist of social awareness (Bussinesolver, 2018). Ioannidou (2008) posits that the origin of the word empathy dates back to the 1880s, when German psychologist Theodore Lipps coined the term "einfuhlung" (literally, "in-feeling") to describe the emotional appreciation of another's feelings. Keeran (2014) sees empathy as the ability to sincerely and accurately feel and reflect the specific emotion(s) of another person. Zinn (1999, cited in Ioannidou, 2008) describes empathy as the process of understanding a person's subjective experience by vicariously sharing that experience while maintaining an observant stance. As for Lord-Kambitsch (2014), empathy indicates an emotional rapport, or identification, with another person. Asserting that empathy is a form of perspective taking, Krznaric (2007) describes it as the imaginative act of stepping into another person's shoes and being able to look at the world from their perspective. According to him, to do this, one has to develop an understanding of the other people's hopes, fears, ambitions, beliefs, prejudices and other aspects of their worldview. Goleman *et al.* (2002) define empathy as 'sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns'. From these definitions of empathy, it can be deduced that empathy involves understanding the situation, feelings or circumstance(s) of another and yet not personally involved in the experience, a vicarious experience.

From the world of work, in terms of relationship building, to the health care profession and family relationships, empathy plays a crucial role. In the business world, when a manager is empathetic, he is attuned to a wide range of emotional signals of their subordinates, and he is able to sense their felt, but unspoken, emotions (Goleman *et al.*, 2002). By understanding the perspectives of the other person (subordinates, direct-reports and other organisational members), managers are able to know where they are coming from, how they feel and think, what Stein (2009) refers to as walking in the other person's moccasins (shoes). As Bradberry & Greaves (2009) indicate, managers can understand the perspectives of others by their active listening. That in turn will improve their communication and enable them identify problems before they escalate. Identifying empathy as a social skill, Kellett *et al.* (2002) indicates that it involves listening, consideration, and supportive behaviours, which play a key role in managing relationships.

One of the hallmarks of an empathetic manager is what Covey (1989) referred to as empathetic listening, or active empathetic listening (Sparrow & Knight, 2006). They argue that (active) empathic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference, a way of being with someone, what Goleman (2006: 280) describes as 'being fully present, and getting in synch'. Covey (1989) posits that in empathic listening, 'you look out through it, you see the world the way they see the world, you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel, and yet, as Sparrow & Knight (2006) points out, you 'provide no distraction by introducing an alien element derived from us rather than from them'. This in effect means listening without judgment. Managers, in empathic listening, listen with their ears, but also, and more importantly, listen with their eyes and with their hearts. In doing that, they listen for feelings and meaning. They listen for behaviour. They use their right brain as well as their left. They

sense, intuit and feel. Empathic listening is so powerful because it gives managers accurate data to work with and it enables them deal with the reality inside another person's head and heart Covey (1989). Such full listening and focus, Goleman (2006) asserts, 'maximizes physiological synchrony', so that the emotions align and blooms positive feelings.

The implication for managers, as Lucas Pols (2018) points out, is that when managers do not empathize with associates, they end up tearing them down, discouraging them and pushing them away when all the associates need is some encouragement. Empathy is achieved when the manager takes recognition personally, because it builds authentic, caring relationships between employees and higher-ups (Amanda, 2013). Businessolver (2018) found that the long-term payoff of empathy is not just a happier employee or satisfied customer – it's a stronger, more engaged workforce and, ultimately, a healthier, more robust business. The flip side of the coin, posits Businessolver (2018), when empathy isn't valued by corporate or management culture, it is not just individual employee interactions that suffer. The ramifications bleed into the very fiber of business impact and, much to the surprise of those in the corner offices, can create a dissatisfied workplace, a potentially disastrous earnings statement, and P.R. nightmare. Services lie at the very hub of an economic activity in any society and there is an increasing recognition of the importance of service and service excellence (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 1994; Oliveira & Roth, 2011). An orientation towards service, as described by Oliveira & Roth (2011), is the tendency or internal inclination for service by a business, and referred to it as the DNA for service. According to them, service orientation is the business' overall propensity for delivering service excellence. Earlier, Lytle and Timmerman (2006: 136) defined Service Orientation as "an organisation-wide embracement of a basic set of relatively enduring organisational policies, practices, and procedures intended to support and reward service-giving behaviours that create and deliver service excellence". From these two definitions, we see service orientation as involving a deliberate desire (an organisation-wide embracement, tendency or internal inclination) or predisposition to provide excellent service. Companies achieve this by directing their structures towards service orientation, a smart way to achieve competitive advantage (Gebauer *et al.*, 2009).

Oliveira & Roth (2011) note that every organisation has a distinctive climate that reflects its service orientation culture. They argue that a company culture that is predisposed toward service will satisfy customers, create and deliver customer value, in terms of service quality and service value, in the market, to achieve the positive bottom line of performance and profitability. It is reflected by showing genuine attention and understanding to customer needs, as well as sharing, helping, assisting, and giving support to customers (Jacobs, 2001; Urban, 2012). Such quality service experience by customers would eventually lead to customer loyalty, a key factors of a successful business.

While a company's tendency toward service is a business strategy that is more externally focused because it captures the extent to which services are an important element of a firm's differentiation strategy (Gebauer *et al.*, 2009), Oliveira & Roth (2011) observe that for a greater impact on a firms economic performance, management practices that take employee satisfaction (internal focus) very seriously by treating their employees well the way they want their customers treated, will ensure excellent customer service. Leaders who are service oriented are always available and put in place an emotional climate, a kind of unwritten standards informing the staff of the service vision or manifesto of the organisation. That way, the staff directly in touch with customers or clients will keep the relationship in the right track (Gebauer, 2009). More so, such leaders monitor or keep in touch with the customers to ensure they get satisfaction from service provided (Goleman *et al.*, 2002).

Service orientation is related to business performance characteristics, such as re-patronage intention and positive word-of-mouth, with the mediating role of staff satisfaction, service value,

and customer, whose relationship was demonstrated in the medical service industry (Yoon *et al.* 2007). Service orientation is positively related to the main service delivery characteristics, and business performance as well. Also, Empirical investigations by Lytle & Timmerman show the important influence service orientation has on such variables as: service quality image, organisational commitment, and profitability (ROA) in the banking sector (Urban, 2012).

The little things we observe and the big things in the organisation- the behaviour of people that become stories, their actions and interactions, the organisational policies, procedures and business practices – learning about these will make for a better organisational awareness, as each of these factors is a window into the other and they impact each other (Gargiulo, 2010). Goleman (2016) posits that one of the qualities found in outstanding leaders, leaders who really get results, leaders that people want to work with, is organisational awareness. According to him, organisational awareness as the ability to read a group's emotional currents and power relationships, and identify influencers, networks, and dynamics within the organisation (Goleman, 2020b). Referring to it as the sixth sense (Goleman, 2020) organisational awareness enables organisational members to be attuned to the environment of the organisation so as to not only understand the forces at work within an organisation, but also the guiding values and unspoken rules that operate among its people (Goleman, 2020b; Popowit & Reeve, 1977). This means, one who is organisationally aware is able to understand different operating systems or aspects of the organisation, including workings, structure, and culture of the organisation. With organisational awareness, one is able to understand the operating political, social, and economic forces, with a capacity to discern the guiding values and unspoken rules in an organisation (Catherine, n.d; Goleman, 2020b). This enhances one's ability to become politically astute and understand the forces at work in an organisation or community, and also fosters the capacity to discern guiding values and unspoken rules.

Goleman (2016) noted that one of the competencies or abilities that define outstanding leadership is organisational awareness. By being organisationally aware, one is able to understand different operating systems or aspects of the organisation including workings, structure, and culture of the organisation. It also consists of the understanding of political, social, and economic issues affecting the organisation (Catherine, n.d); Goleman, 2020b). People Builders (2020) see organisational awareness reading social and political currents in organisations, on teams, in their businesses, their communities, their schools, and their neighborhoods. While both managers and employees can be organisationally aware towards a positive bottom line, we are in this work concerned with managers' awareness of the operating environment of the organisation.

The organisationally aware manager creates a strong sense of identity and learns to be aware of organisational systems and the operating environments, what Gargiulo (2010) refers to as 'the small things' and 'the big things'. In being organisationally aware, the manager will be very keen in detecting the crucial social networks and read key power relationships, including the key opinion formers in the organisation: how the decisions in the organisations are made, who make them, know who to talk to, persuade or influence to make things happen. Goleman (2016) argues that such awareness and understanding of how a group or organisation works is a kind of higher order empathy. Such a manager has gone beyond understanding himself (self-awareness) to being able to regulate himself, has empathy and formed relationships in the organisation. Being motivated and well aligned with the corporate visions, will always work for the greater good of all in the organisation. Such a leader definitely resonates with his followers to be also organisationally aware. When the followers understand the vision of the organisation or team, their roles and responsibilities, they will be more engaged, productive and effective with their respective roles (People Builders, 2020).

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Perceived organisational support (POS) is the central construct within organisational support theory (OST). It refers to the degree to which employees believe their work organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing (Baran *et al.*, 2012; Caesens *et al.*, 2019; Eisenberger *et al.* (1986); Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). *This means, perceived organisational support hinges on the perception of employees regarding the way the organisation, represented by the managers (agents of the organisation) value the effort they put in toward the success of the organisation and care for their wellbeing.* Yew (2011) noted that research on perceived organisational support (POS) began with the seminal work of Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). Eisenberger, *et al.* (1986) observed that if managers are concerned with their employees' commitment to the organisation, employees on the other hand, are also focused on the organisation's commitment to them. For employees, the organisation serves as an important source of socio-emotional resources, such as respect and caring, and tangible benefits, such as wages and medical benefits. Being regarded highly by the organisation helps to meet employees' needs for approval, esteem, and affiliation. Positive valuation by the organisation also provides an indication that increased effort will be noted and rewarded. Employees therefore take an active interest in the regard with which they are held by their employer (Eisenberger, *et al.*, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The subject of perceived organisation support is important because organisations are interested in developing committed workforce to reduce employee turnover and absenteeism, while improving the employees' performance and job-related attitudes (Yew, 2011). Again, according to Podsakoff & Mackenzie, (1997, cited in Yew, 2011), there is a growing evidence that employee's positive attitudes and discretionary action or behaviours are important factors affecting organisational performance. Such positive attitude and discretionary behaviour could only be if employees perceive their effort as being valued by the organisation and yield such benefits as approval and respect, pay and promotion, and access to information and other forms of aid needed to better carry out their job (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). They assert that in this regard, the norm of reciprocity allows employees and employers to reconcile these distinctive orientations.

According to the norm of reciprocity, when one person treats another well, the norm of reciprocity obliges the return of a favourable treatment (Gouldner, 1960, cited in Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). This means that people will respond favorably to each other by returning benefits for benefits. This ultimately results in exchange of benefits. According to Blau (1964), the theory conceptualizes social relations in term of social exchange; that mutual bonds emerge in social interactions as persons who incur obligations reciprocate. This suggests that the exchange relationship between two parties often goes beyond economic exchange and includes social exchange. In connection with employer and employee relationship, they exchange not only impersonal resources such as money, but also socio-emotional resources such as approval, respect, recognition and support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; Yew, 2011).

Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960, in Yew, 2011; Caesens *et al.*, 2019), OST holds that employees feel an inner obligation to reciprocate this favorable and supportive treatment received from their organisation by developing favorable attitudes toward the organisation and by helping the organisation reaching its goals. This means that as employees perceive high levels of perceived organisational support (POS), they are more likely to reciprocate the organisation with positive attitudes such as higher levels of affective commitment and favorable work behaviours, commitment to organisational goals and lower intention to leave (Yew, 2010). Empirical evidence suggests that POS is positively related to a plethora of positive attitudes and behaviours at work such as employees' affective commitment, organisational identification, work engagement, and job performance (Caesens *et al.*, 2019).

POS was also found to be positively related to several indicators of employees' well-being such as job satisfaction and general health (Bradley & Cartwright, 2002; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2014; Caesens *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, Caesens *et al.* (2019) note that numerous studies indicated that POS decreases employees' turnover intentions, absenteeism, and burnout.

However, POS can only be powerfully influenced when employees perceive that the favorable treatment received is associated with organisational free choice, what Eisenberger *et al.* (2016) referred to as favourable discretionary treatment. According to them, favorable treatment associated with perceptions of nondiscretionary treatment by the organisation has little impact on POS. For instance, if employees believe that the organisation is competitive job market, government regulations or public pressure, influences on POS will be minimized. Based on this principle, therefore, perceived organisational support will be more effectively enhanced if employees view organisational rewards and favorable job conditions such as pay, promotions, job enrichment, and influence over organisational policies as voluntary behaviours of organisations (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986).

Studies such as Buchanan (1974), Tansky & Cohen (2001), and Yoon & Thye (2002) have examined the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisational commitment and found that perceived organisational support is an important factor in revealing organisational commitment (Colakoglu *et al.*, 2010). Yahya *et al.* (2012) reported that a study conducted by Chen & Eldridge (2011) also found that even though their study did not show a significant relationship between perceived organisational commitment and newcomer social integration, it did reveal a link between perceived organisational support and employees' intention to leave. This means that perceived organisational support is negatively related to newcomer's turnover intention. Again, Cheng and Chiu (2008, cited in Maamari & Messarra, 2012) examined the effects of supervisor support on organisational citizenship behaviour in seven companies in Taiwan using matched questionnaires between subordinates and supervisors. According to them, results indicated that supervisor support influenced employees' commitment and person-organisation fit which in turn enhanced the level of organisational citizenship behaviour.

Reinforcement Theory

This theoretical foundation is anchored on Skinner's (1938) reinforcement theory, otherwise known as operant conditioning (McLeod, 2018). It is one of the earliest theories of work motivation that focused on determinants of behaviour (Donovan, 2001). It states that individual's behaviour is a function of its consequences (Management Study Guide, 2013). What that means is that individuals tend to repeat behaviour with positive consequences, but avoid behaviour with negative consequences. As Catania (1973) and Epstein (1978) put it, if we can show that a response increases in frequency because (and only because) it is followed by a particular stimulus, we call that stimulus a reinforcer, and its presentation, reinforcement.

Funder (Redmond, 2016) noted Skinner as one of the Behaviourist who was interested in changing or shaping the behaviour of people and sought to explain behaviour from observable phenomena that could be measured and experimented with, in contrast with the introspective techniques of humanism and psychoanalysis - the tendency to explain behaviour from the mysterious workings of the mind. In demonstrating that Psychology can only be a science, just as the other natural sciences, by means of measured and experimented observable phenomena, Skinner designed a box with a lever inside that released food when pressed. He placed a hungry rat into the box to see if the rat could figure out how to get to the food. When the rat was first placed into the box, it fumbled around until it inadvertently hit the lever and the food was produced. Through several trials, the rat learned to go straight for the lever to produce the food

when it was hungry. Therefore, Skinner tested positive reinforcement, and concluded it does produce desired behaviours (McLeod, 2007, in Redmond, 2016)

In his experiments, Skinner identified three types of responses, or operants that can follow behaviour (McLeod, 2018), viz:

- i. Neutral operants which are responses from the environment that neither increases nor decrease the probability of a behaviours being repeated.
- ii. Reinforcers: These are responses from the environment that increase the probability of a behaviour being repeated. Reinforcers can be either positive or negative.
- iii. Punishers: Responses from the environment that decrease the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated. Punishment weakens behaviour.

This work is based on Reinforcement as an operant condition. The types of reinforcements are positive and negative reinforcements. While both influence or modify behaviour, we emphasise here on positive reinforcement.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the drive for middle level managers social-awareness facilitates an improved level of understanding and consciousness of others and of ones positioning within a wider network of activities within the organisation – thus, enhancing the managers sense of responsibility for others and thereby impacting on the trust, recognition and development of support systems for the workers

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

- (iii) Executive development programs should be designed to drive the social awareness and cognition of managers so as to improve the consciousness of individuals and an understanding of the implications of their actions within the workplace.
- (iv) The culture of the organisation should be patterned and elaborated in such a way that members of the organisation understand the underlying implications of their actions on others and the imperatives of behaviour considerations when dealing or working with other members within the network of the organisation.

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