

**MORALITY IN BUSINESS RE-ENGINEERING: LINKING WORKPLACE ETHICS TO
EMPLOYEE LOYALTY OF NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY, PORTHARCOURT.**

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Abstract

This study empirically investigated the influential relationship between workplace ethics and loyalty of employees of Nigeria Bottling Company, Port Harcourt. The study utilized courtesy and integrity as dimensions of workplace ethics while absenteeism and zero turnover intention were the measures of employee loyalty utilized in the study. The study is premised on the assumptions of the social exchange theory. The study sampled a population size of 151 staff of Nigeria bottling company in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study adopted quantitative data type with the questionnaire as the only instrument for data collection. The collated data were analysed using the spearman rank order correlation. The result of the study revealed Workplace ethics as a strong predictor of employee loyalty hence, we made the following recommendations: Organizations should intentionally promote courtesy simple behaviors such as respect, active listening, timely communication, and appreciation as a core part of workplace culture. Managers should always reinforce courtesy by modeling polite behavior, encouraging respectful communication, and recognizing courteous actions among staff, Organizations should build trust between management and employees. When leaders act with integrity; being honest, transparent, and consistent, employees feel they can trust management. Organization should create a fair and integrity work environment.

Keywords: Workplace, ethics, integrity, loyalty, courtesy.

Background of the study

Employee loyalty is a significant concept in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management, as it plays a crucial role in impacting performance, retention rates, and organizational success (Maulana, 2025). According to current research, employee commitment is the extent of a worker's attachment to and loyalty to an organization, usually measured by how much a worker wants to stay in the organization in the long term, how they identify with the organization's goals and objectives, and how much they are willing to do more than is required by the job. In today's business landscape, employee loyalty is a key focus due to its positive impact on productivity, employee retention, and customer satisfaction.

Researchers have highlighted the importance of various factors in influencing employee loyalty, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leadership, organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and career growth. For instance, job satisfaction has been consistently identified

as a significant factor affecting loyalty, as satisfied employees are more likely to remain with the company, and report higher levels of commitment to the organization's purpose (Hadji, 2024).

Employee loyalty is a significant and vital factor in maintaining productivity, turnover and organizational performance, hence the reason why it has come to the fore as a major concern in organizational research. Employees' loyalty is generally considered to be their emotional commitment, identification with organizational objectives, and intention to continue serving the organization. Loyal employees are those who are working in the company with dedication, who are striving towards the goals of the company while pursuing their own individual objectives and who are more involved in the company's activities beyond their formal job scope. The following attitudes are manifested in lower turnover intentions, higher commitment and greater sense of belonging in the organization: Studies have proved that employee loyalty is not simply a result of the length of service, but it is a phenomenon related to a combination of psychological, organizational and cultural factors. For example, Job Satisfaction, Empowerment and Positive Human-Resource Practices (Recognition and Feedback) are all important factors that improve Emotional Commitment and prolong the duration of employees' association with the organization (Omar & Karwan 2021).

Ethical climate, however, has emerged as a key field of study in the study of organizations because of its impact on employee behavior, decision making and the effectiveness of the organizations. Ethical climate is a group's perception of what is ethically right and what is appropriate for solving ethical problems in an organization. In today's global, competitive and complex world, ethical issues related to misconduct, corruption, discrimination or conflicts of interest are very common, and this makes it important that organizations have a solid ethical basis.

It is well documented that a positive ethical climate has a strong influence on responsible behavior and integrity of organizations. Studies have indicated that firms with a clear ethical climate generally have more trust in the firm, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and fewer unethical behaviors. On the other hand, poor or unclear moral climate can lead to a rise in unethical behaviour, a decline in employee morale and a negative impact on organization reputation. Such effects are not only on internal stakeholders but can have social and economical implications.

Despite the importance of workplace ethics in achieving employee loyalty, Most studies focus on Western and developed economies, particularly in the United States and Europe. This limits understanding of how ethical climate functions in non-Western, culturally diverse, or developing contexts, where societal norms and workplace values differ significantly. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence on whether the dynamics between ethical climate and employee loyalty hold across different cultural and economic environments hence a gap and as a way of departure from the know, this study seeks to investigate the influence of workplace ethics on employee loyalty

Statement of the Problem

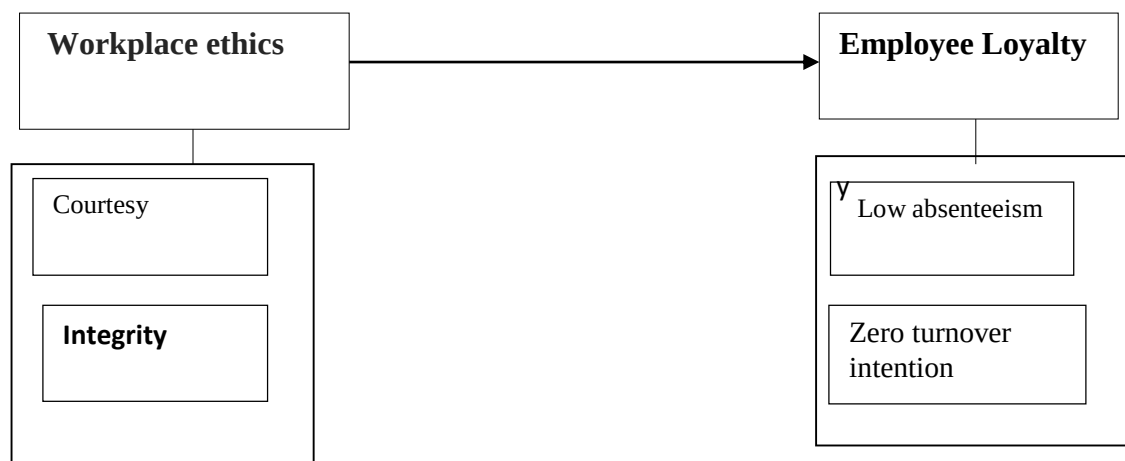
Employee loyalty is a critical factor influencing organizational stability, productivity, and long-term competitiveness. In manufacturing and fast-moving consumer goods companies such as the Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC), a loyal workforce is essential for maintaining operational efficiency, product quality, and consistent market performance. However, many organizations in Nigeria, including NBC, continue to face challenges related to declining employee loyalty, evidenced by increased employee turnover, reduced commitment, absenteeism, and declining morale.

Even though NBC has tried to pay competitive salaries, offer training and other welfare facilities, the high cases of employee grievance and high staff turnover indicate that the desired level of employee loyalty may not be achieved. Job insecurity, perceived reward inequity, limited career opportunities, management-employee relations and production pressure due to production targets can adversely impact employee commitment to organization.

The high rate of employee loyalty is a major problem to the Nigerian Bottling Company because of the increased cost of recruitment and training, loss of experienced personnel, disruption of production processes, and the reduction in overall performance. Moreover, a lack of loyalty can hinder the company's ability to sustain a strong organizational culture and achieve its strategic objectives in a highly competitive beverage industry.

While some studies have explored the factors that affect employee motivation and job satisfaction in Nigerian organizations, few empirical studies had been conducted on the effect of workplace ethics on employee loyalty in the Nigerian Bottling Company. This gap can cause management to struggle in determining what the key factors are that drive loyalty and what policies they should be using to increase employee commitment. Hence, the aim of this research is to explore the factors that make an employee stay loyal in the Nigerian Bottling Company and the effect of organisational practices on employee loyalty.

Conceptual framework of workplace ethics and employee loyalty



Aim / Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between workplace ethics and employee loyalty of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To examine the relationship between courtesy and low absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis
2. To examine the relationship between courtesy and zero employee turnover of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis .
3. To examine the relationship between integrity and low absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis.
4. To establish the relationship between integrity and zero employee turnover of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Research Questions

To serve as a guide in this study, the following research questions are put forth

1. What is the relationship between courtesy and low absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis
2. What is the relationship between courtesy and zero employee turnover of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis
3. What is the relationship between integrity and low absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis
4. What is the relationship between integrity and zero employee turnover Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis

Research Hypotheses

For the purpose of empirical analysis the following hypothesis are put forth

H01: There is no significant relationship between courtesy and absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis

H02: There is no significant relationship between courtesy and zero employee turnover Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis

H03: There is no significant relationship between integrity and absenteeism of Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis

H04: There is no significant relationship between integrity and zero employee turnover Nigeria Bottling Company in Port Harcourt metropolis

Conceptual Review

The study has Workplace ethics as its predictor variable with courtesy and integrity as its empirical reference. While employee loyalty is its criterion with low absenteeism and zero turnover intention as its measures.

Concept of workplace ethics

Workplace ethics is a framework of moral standards that are used in the workplace. It is a completely new field of study because it incorporates political theory, legal doctrine, philosophical writings, and historical records. The term "ethics" has evolved into one that can mean many different things. Workplace ethics offer standards for appropriate behavior by organizations in both their daily operations and the development of their strategies. A person's actions and behavior within a business organization are governed by current organizational guidelines, tenets and collection of values, and conventions, which are referred to as business ethics. There are two types of business ethics: normative business ethics and descriptive business ethics. The field is predominantly normative in nature as a business practice and a professional specialty (Stead, Worrell and Stead 2010). A set of moral standards that are implemented in the workplace is what is known as workplace ethics. It is an entirely new branch of the scientific community since it brings together philosophical and historical sources in addition to legal theory and political discourse. According to Schwartz (2007), the term "ethics" has grown increasingly fluid and may refer to a wide variety of facets. He went on to elaborate that ethics in the workplace offer rules for appropriate behavior by firms in the process of formulating strategies as well as in their day-to-day operation

. The concept of work ethics cannot be over emphasised in organisations, regardless of the sector they belong to. This is because to attain the success of any institution's goals and objectives, laid down rules and regulations are relevant for shaping employees' attitudes and behaviour within organisations (Gberevbie, 2017). Work ethics is an important concept needed to be imbibed in any action and responsibility of a public servant (Abdullah and Halim, 2016). Human resource research has been a significant focus in promoting ethical conduct in

organisations (Khan, Abbas, Gul, and Raja, 2015). A positive attitude is expected of employees to “guarantee effective, efficient and increase work productivity and good service delivery” (Abdullah and Halim, 2016:2). An individual approach, feeling, and principles towards organisational responsibilities are seen as the work ethics of such individuals, either positive or negative or productive or unproductive (Oyelade, 2017). According to Heelas (2002), “work ethics of whatever variety involves the ascription of value to work. Work is valued as a means to some end.”

Owuor, Nyambegera and Wainaina (2020,) see workplace ethics as a “link to behaviouralism. It involves the behavioural approach of employees and the involvement of moral positivism towards doing a great job through loyalty, honesty, and compassion.” According to various Nigerian public service ethical conduct (Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, the Civil Service Rules, and Financial Regulations), the ethical standards are Discipline, Honesty, Loyalty, Courtesy, Courage and Tact” (Omisore, 2015). It is seen by Velasquez (2011) as “the code of conduct governing public officials that enables them to obey the right standards, thus prompting organisational productivity level and the resulting profitability level. “Organisational work ethics helps in “disciplining workers and gives them an environment of honesty, fairness, and integrity” (Hayat, Shakeel and Chen; 2021).

Dimensions of Workplace Ethics

Courtesy

Courtesy is a fundamental aspect of a successful and healthy work environment. It enhances communication, teamwork, employee relations, and the overall reputation of the organization. Employers and employees should prioritize courtesy as an essential part of their workplace culture to promote productivity, satisfaction, and long-term. Courtesy is of great importance in the workplace for several reasons. It contributes to a positive and productive work environment, fosters good relationships among employees, and reflects well on the organization as a whole. Courtesy and respect towards others should be standard behavior in every workplace, regardless of role, rank, stress or circumstances (Martins 2017)

Demonstrating workplace courtesies, it's not about simply being nice, it's about the effect you have on your colleagues and your workplace. Incivility makes people less motivated and decreases work performance whether you are the one experiencing the incivility or witnessing it (Wilfred, Matoke, Yegon , Egeessa 2014). Being unaware or uncaring of your behaviour will eventually create an unproductive, toxic and hostile environment. There's no excuse for discourtesy in the workplace. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “there is always enough time to be courteous.” Take the time. Be mindful of it. The results a productive, pleasant, creative, helpful, happy and healthy workplace for everyone.

Integrity

According to Mocamber (2019), integrity is thought of as the sincerity and truthfulness of a person's deeds. Hypocrisy is in opposite to it. An integrity standard judging entails seeing internal consistency as virtue. It is now clear from a number of studies that enhancing the culture of integrity has grown to be a top priority and is crucial for an organization (Kebede and Lemma, 2020). According to Vaduva et al. (2016), integrity ensures that an ethical concept is applied consistently not only locally but also worldwide. Trustworthiness Trust is both a noun and a verb a feeling and action that is a crucial means by which individuals or groups interact. Credibility is founded on the knowledge and understanding that the other person is reliable and upholds the best interests of the person or group, helping them in accordance with their requirements and choices (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020). A

Concept of Employee Loyalty

Loyalty, as a general term, signifies a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a particular object, which may be another person or group of persons, an ideal, a duty, or a cause. It expresses itself in both thought and action and strives for the identification of the interests of the loyal person with those of the object". Employee loyalty could be defined as a psychological inclination, a "feeling" of identification with, an attachment or a commitment to the organization (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014).

Loyalty defines strong desire to continue membership of an organization), living and standing up to the vision and values of the organization (Davis, 2015; Durkin, 2007), investing high levels of efforts for the sake of the organization, or even a willingness to work late (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014). Companies clearly understand that loyal employees make them solid and profitable and that happy but disgruntled (thus, disloyal) employees have the opposite effect (Durkin, 2007). The employee loyalty has been proven to create value for organizations (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014) through higher levels of effort and contribution provided, better product quality, better service, higher levels of consumer satisfaction, increased profits, greater shareholder value, increased organizational reputation, and lower turnover rates/costs (see Davis, 2015; Durkin, 2007; Duboff & Heaton, 1999; Guillon & Cezanne, 2014; Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014; Silvestro, 2002). On the other side, a lack of loyalty can clearly be detrimental and result

Synopsis of Employee Loyalty

Low Absenteeism

One of the most important issues that human resource managers are dealing with is managing their staff's absence behavior. Absenteeism is a temporary absence from work (temporary withdrawal from an organization) for reasons such as illness, death in the family, or other personal issues (Mathis and Jackson 2004). It is also interpreted as an employee's intentional or habitual absence from work (Cucchiella et al. 2014).

Gibson (2019) distinguish between authorized and unauthorized absenteeism, while (Blau 1985) and (Cheloha and Farr 1980) divide absenteeism into organizationally excused and organizationally unexcused categories, with types such as sickness, jury duty, religious holidays, funeral leave, and transportation problems belonging to the category of excused forms of absence. Absenteeism is relatively easy to measure. There are two kinds of absence metrics: time lost and absence frequency. Time-lost measures express absenteeism as a sum of units of time (e.g., hours or days) away from work (Steel 2013), while absence frequency is the number of absences in a specific period of time regardless of duration (Chadwick-Jones et al. 1971). Excessive absenteeism can have a serious impact on any company. The seriousness of this impact is the subject of extensive debate. Some of the negative consequences of absenteeism are high costs, such as direct compensation costs or replacement costs, as well as loss of productivity (Mathis and Jackson 2004). The importance of studying absenteeism lies in the fact that a better understanding of absence behavior can lead to its successful management. Employees who feel loyal are more likely to show up consistently because they care about their role and the company's success. Low absenteeism is widely regarded as a meaningful indicator of employee loyalty within an organization. Employee absenteeism refers to the habitual or frequent absence from work beyond what is considered acceptable or necessary. When absenteeism levels are consistently low, it often reflects a workforce that is committed, engaged, and aligned with organizational goals.

One way low absenteeism signals loyalty is through employees' willingness to prioritize their work responsibilities. Loyal employees tend to feel a sense of obligation and attachment to their organization, which motivates them to attend work regularly, even when faced with minor inconveniences or challenges. This behavior demonstrates not only reliability but also a personal investment in the organization's success.

Low Employee Turnover

Employee turnover refers to the rate at which employees leave an organization and are replaced by others. Early definitions consider it in terms of both voluntary and involuntary departures, where voluntary turnover often signals dissatisfaction or better external opportunities, and retention reflects the organization's ability to keep employees over time (Hom & Griffeth, as cited in Ongori, 2007). Low employee turnover can be conceptualized as the absence of turnover, implying very high retention and strong organizational attachment. This concept is important because understanding what drives *zero* intention to quit helps organizations prioritize retention strategies.

The occurrence of turnover, can result in losses for the company both in terms of resources, costs, or employee motivation. The occurrence of turnover means that the company will lose a number of employees and must find replacements by procuring new employees. Companies must pay for the recruitment stage to get new employees who are ready to use. Motivation and morale of employees who remain can be affected. Employees who previously had no intention of looking for a new job will start looking for job vacancies, which will then turn over (Pawesti & Wikansari, 2017).

An organizational culture with positive communication, respect and inclusivity leads to greater employee satisfaction and a lower intention to quit. For instance, if there's poor communication or a hierarchical structure, they can increase the risk of turnover, despite moderate compensation. Many studies have demonstrated that job satisfaction is one of the most important antecedents of turnover intention. Unhappy employees may be more likely to quit when they are unhappy with their jobs or supervisors (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Organizational commitment emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization is negatively related to turnover; an increase in commitment leads to a decrease in the will to quit (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Turnover is determined by workplace climate and job design. Turnover risk is high when jobs are seen as being low in autonomy and high in stress and are reported as boring (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Less turnover through supportive supervision and opportunities for skill use increases employee engagement (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Competitive compensation packages decrease turnover by satisfying employee's economic needs (Hom et al., 2017). The equity theory proposes that employees compare their input-output ratio with other employees and if they feel they are under rewarded, they are likely to turn over (Adams, 1965). Not having the opportunity to advance in one's career is a strong predictor of turnover intentions. Employees who feel that they have minimal prospects for promotion or learning new skills tend to look elsewhere (Price, 2001).

Theoretical Review

The baseline theory under which this study is underpinned is the Social exchange theory by Blau (1964), the theory provides a foundational explanation for the relationship between loyalty and absenteeism. According to Blau (1964), employees who perceive fair treatment, organizational support, and reciprocal benefits develop a sense of obligation and attachment toward their employer. This sense of loyalty often translates into lower absenteeism, as

employees are motivated to reciprocate positive organizational experiences through sustained presence and engagement at work (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

Methodology

This study adopt a cross-sectional survey design which according to Ahiauzu (2006) identified as the collection of standardize information from ideal sample representative selected from a specified group, class, gender, nationality or individual with certain characteristics which make up an entire population. The choice of the chosen design is dependent on the nature and purpose of the study, type of investigation, study settling, units of analysis, and the time horizon concerned. This study therefore is correlational in nature because its investigated the relationship between workplace ethics and employee loyalty of staff of Nigeria bottling company in PortHarcourt. The population of the study is made up of 273 staff of the Nigeria bottling company, PortHarcourt, while a sample of 153 was obtained using the Taro Yamen Formula. However, only 151 of the sample was used due to questionnaire mortality. The study adopted the use of the spearman rank correlational coefficient an inferential statistical tool for data analysis.

Correlation between Courtesy and Low Absenteeism

			Courtesy	Low Absenteeism	Low Turnover
Spearman's rho	Courtesy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.590**	.554**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	151	151	151
	Low absenteeism	Correlation Coefficient	.494**	.477**	.488**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
		N	151	151	151
	Low Employee Turnover	Correlation Coefficient	.554**	.607**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	151	151	151

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between courtesy and low absenteeism

The result for the first hypothetical statement (H01) indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variables. The evidence shows that at a $\rho = .590$ and a $P < 0.05$. courtesy significantly impacts on low absenteeism. Consequently, the hypothesis is considered as false and therefore rejected based on the lack of statistical evidence to prove otherwise.

The result for the second hypothetical statement (H02) indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variables. The evidence shows that at a $\rho = .494$ and a $P < 0.05$. courtesy significantly impacts on low employee turnover. Consequently, the hypothesis is considered as false and therefore rejected based on the lack of statistical evidence to prove otherwise.

Correlation between Intergrity and Employee Loyalty

			Integrity	Low Absenteeism	Low employee turnover
Spearman's rho	Non-financial reward	Correlation	1.000	.473**	.438**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
	Quality of work	N	151	151	151
		Correlation	.473**	1.000	.477**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	Service delivery	N	92	92	92
		Correlation	.438**	.477**	1.000
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	Efficiency	N	151	151	151
		Correlation	.774**	.607**	.488**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
		N	151	151	151

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between Integrity and employee loyalty

The result for the third hypothetical statement indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variables. The evidence shows that at a $\rho = .473$ and a $P < 0.05$, an organizational integrity enhances workers loyalty. Consequently, the hypothesis is considered as false and therefore rejected based on the lack of statistical evidence to prove otherwise.

The result for the fourth hypothetical statement (H04) also indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables. The evidence shows that at a $\rho = .438$ and a $P < 0.05$, integrity contributes to low employee turnover. Consequently, the hypothesis is considered as false and therefore rejected based on the lack of statistical evidence to prove otherwise

Conclusions

Owing to the significant statistical backup obtained in this study of ours, our confidence therefore is strong enough to generalize the findings and conclusions of this study despite its associated limitations. Organization need to maintain high ethical standard if they must sustain employee loyalty. Conclusively, workplace ethics in terms of courtesy and integrity help in enhancing the loyalty of employees.

Recommendation

1. Organizations should intentionally promote courtesy simple behaviors such as respect, active listening, timely communication, and appreciation as a core part of workplace culture. When leaders and coworkers consistently treat employees with courtesy, employees feel valued as individuals rather than just as workers
2. Managers should always reinforce courtesy by modeling polite behavior, encouraging respectful communication, and recognizing courteous actions among staff. Small gestures such as acknowledging contributions, saying thank you, responding thoughtfully to concerns, and respecting personal boundaries can create a positive work environment where employees feel safe and motivated. Over time, this

respectful atmosphere reduces turnover, increases job satisfaction, and strengthens employees' commitment to staying with the organization

3. Organizations should build Trust Between Management and Employees When leaders act with integrity; being honest, transparent, and consistent , employees feel they can trust management. Trust reduces uncertainty and creates a sense of security, making employees more likely to stay committed to the organization.
4. Organization should Create a fair and integrity work environment. Integrity ensures that policies, promotions, and disciplinary actions are applied fairly. Employees who believe they are treated with respect and equality develop stronger emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization.

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