



Investigation on organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the degree of relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design using modified standardized structured questionnaire to elicit data. The population was obtained from selected construction companies during field survey. Systematic sampling technique was adopted in selecting four (4) construction companies from the region. The sample size and number of units allocated to each construction company was determined using Taro Yamane and Bowley's Proportional Allocation Formulae respectively. Spearman Rank Correlation was used to test the formulated hypothesis on the platform of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0. The finding revealed a positive significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria. The study, therefore, recommends that organizations need to entrench acceptable norms and values in the system that would leave all stakeholders satisfied to reduce fear, anxiety, suspicion, and distrust. Organizations need to foster a work environment and climate where lackadaisical behavior is unacceptable.

Keywords: organizational culture, organizational paranoia, construction companies, South-East, Nigeria

Introduction

Organizations have remained dynamic most particularly because human beings are different in their make-ups – how they think, react and respond to issues, people and events. The human capital is a critical resource for any organization as it drives the entire process and co-ordinate other resources of the organization including construction companies for the desired output. The complex nature of human behaviour makes it virtually unpredictable. Employees in different organizations comprise people with diverse personalities, values, beliefs, attitudes, expectations and competencies, thus a challenge for managers to cope with. Even in the face of the complexity of employees, the culture of the organization contributes much to management style, employee behaviour, the operational patterns and activities. Employees process information differently given their perception, personality clashes, attitudinal problems, poor interpersonal relationship, self-interest, distrust and suspicion among the hierarchy of workers. This brings to bear the concept of organizational paranoia.

Organizational paranoia is a distrustful behaviour by employees arising out of suspicions and distorted actions of organizational intentions (Subramanian, 2017) ^[43]. Organizational paranoia is inherent in human nature and further developed by the environment that organizations provide for people working together to attain a common goal. Distrust and suspicion are common and recurring problems within many organizations. In the organizational literature, paranoia is “heightened and exaggerated distrust that encompasses an array of beliefs, including organizational members’ perceptions of being threatened, harmed, marginalized, victimized, persecuted, mistreated, disparaged and so on, by malevolent others within the organization” (Kramer, 2001) ^[25]. These ugly behaviours need to be addressed to align with the culture of the organization. That is why the relevance of organizational culture, particularly in relation to construction companies cannot be treated with levity. Every construction company at the small, medium or large scale, local or multi-national require all shades of workers; unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled professionals to work as a team to deliver projects in record time, according to cost and quality specification. Therefore, it is the collective input of the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled professionals that brings to fruition a construction project idea.

Due to the suspicions and troublesome personality traits of paranoia, it is unlikely that some with paranoia will thrive in interpersonal relationships. These individuals typically have a biased perception of reality, often exhibiting, more hostile beliefs (Bentall and Taylor, 2006) ^[9]. This suggests a disharmony between employers, managers, supervisors on one hand and middle level and junior staff on the other hand. Managements of companies have tried to create an environment in which individuals and groups of people co-operate with one another to achieve organizational goals, yet organizations seldom help individuals achieve their personal goals, managers and supervisors are hostile and unfriendly to subordinates, subordinates become distrusting and suspicious, leading to disruption of co-operative endeavours and make employees dysfunctional. Employees see negative experiences in the work environment as motivated by management and attribute success to self while

management see the worker as not doing enough and employees just done a favour for being employed. Creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, devoid of fear and anxiety of employees, suspicions, perceived hatred, threat, and harm form elements of organizational paranoia.

Organizational culture is penned as the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and values of the organization, acquired through social learning that control the way individuals and groups in the organization interact with one another and with parties outside it. Culture at the workplace is an invisible but powerful force that influences the behaviour of people and dictates how they dress, act and perform their jobs, Dwirantwi cited in Bosomtwe and Obeng (2018). Organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria calls for investigation of the problem associated with construction companies' policy bias for engagement of more temporary workers.

The work reviewed several empirical studies carried out in different regions of Kenya, Somalia, Singapore, Fars, Pakistan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran and in different public sector organizations and private organizations. In Iran and Oman (Isa, Ugheoke and Noor (2016) ^[22], Salehipour and Ahmand (2018) studies covered their Ministries of Education. In Saudi Arabi (Saad and Abbas, 2018) ^[38] looked at public sector work. Wambugu (2014) ^[47] worked on power sector organizations. Aftab, Rana and Sarwar (2012) studied banking sector. Other areas covered include: Mohammed and Abukar (2013) ^[29] university system, Ghasghaeinia and Hafezi (2015) ^[17] universities, Anozie and Ismail (2016) ^[8] telecommunication companies and Padhi (2017) ^[36] public organizations respectively. The above studies were clearly done outside South East not even in any part of Nigeria to the best of my ability. Again, none of the work was done on construction companies. Against the backdrop of the identified gaps, the aims to fill these gaps in knowledge by carrying out organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South-East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Every prospective employee prefers a permanent employment for job security but where he/she ends up being engaged as temporary staff, employee feels wronged and mistreated by the action of the management. The worker from inception feel threatened as no temporary employment guarantees job security by implication long-term wellbeing for him and his family. The perceived anomalies of the companies create resentment among employees. Construction companies driven by profitability motives, legitimize such unfriendly labour practice of temporary employment, instilling persistent fear and anxiety in the workforce, exercise unpleasant verbal and non-verbal treatment excluding physical contact, attribute failures to employees and take credit for successes. Organizational culture is the collection of traditions, values, beliefs, policies, and attitudes that constitute a persuasive contest for everything one does and thinks in an organization. The impact of culture is not limited to the way managers behave within an organization but also the decisions they make about the organizations' relationship with its environment and its strategy.

Organizational Paranoia is inherent in human nature and it is a psychological problem which is hidden and comes out in certain circumstances. This is due to the individual's feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and lack of confidence, fear and a host of other complex feelings while working in an organization. Construction companies in Nigeria have been known for engaging more of its workforce on temporary employment basis in Nigeria as against permanent and pensionable employment. The employment status of workers has given management of these companies the impetus to sack workers at will. Therefore, for the fear and anxiety of being placed on redundancy, laid-off, or sacked employees have become suspicious of management intentions and activities leaving distrust among the workers, supervisors and management.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Organizational culture

Mullins (2010) ^[31] defines organization culture as the collection of traditions, values, beliefs, policies, and attitudes that constitute a persuasive contest for everything one does and thinks in an organization. For Idiegbeyan-ose, Opeke, Nwokeoma and Osmulu (2018) organizational culture can be described as the sum of basic assumptions, practices, principles, beliefs, norms and values that govern the behaviour and actions of members of a particular organization, community or society. Many more scholars have given their different definitions and descriptions of what organization or corporate culture is but the concept seems to revolve round the elements of beliefs, norms and values that prevail in human groups that guide their daily conduct and activities. Beliefs are considered to be assumptions about reality and are derived and reinforced by experience. Values are considered to be assumptions about ideals that are desirable and worth striving for while norms are the expected standards of behaviour. So, when beliefs, values and norms are shared in an organization, they create corporate or organizational culture (Kazmi, 2008) ^[23].

Culture in an organization exists at two levels of visible artefacts and observable behaviour, such as ceremonies, stories, slogans, behaviours, dress and physical settings and the deeper values embedded in the mind of the people in the form of values, assumptions, beliefs and thought processes (Kotler and Heskett, 1992) ^[24]. Sathe cited in Kazmi (2008) ^[23] remarked that the manifestations of corporate culture in an organization are evident in:

- Shared sayings (for example, ‘let us get down for work’).
- Shared actions (for example, service-oriented approach) perform their duties.
- Shared feelings (for example, ‘hard work is rewarded here’).
- Shared things (for example, the way people dress) (Bosomtwe and Obeng, 2018) ^[11].

An organization has a strong culture if it has specific values that are widely and deeply shared; the culture is considered to be weak if those specific values are not shared widely and deeply (Aragyas-wamy and Byles cited in Kazmi, 2008) ^[23]. The impact of culture is not limited to the way managers behave within an organization but also the decisions they make about the organizations relationship with its environment and its strategy (Lorsch, 1988; Pearce and Robinson, 1988 cited in Kazmi, 2008) ^[23]. Culture is a strength that can also be a weakness. When corporate culture acts as strength, it can facilitate communication, decision making and control, and create cooperation and commitment. An organization’s culture could be strong and cohesive when it conducts its business according to a clear and explicit set of principles and values, which the management devotes considerable time to communicate to the employees and which values are shared widely across the organization (Pearce and Robinson, 1988) ^[37].

Organizational paranoia

The term organizational paranoia in its original form “paranoia” was in the Greek word “par-a-noya”, derived from the verb “para-noeo”, with the literal meaning of “derangement”, or “departure from the normal” (“para”) in “thinking” (“noeo”) (Stedman cited in Thomas, 2016) ^[46]. Tracing the usage of the term, Lewis cited in Thomas (2016) ^[46] noted that the term, "paranoia", first appeared in the plays of the great Greek tragedians, Aeschylus (525-456 BC), Euripides (485-407 BC) and Aristophanes (450-388 BC). With the passage of time and the dynamics of the social environment, the concept either simply paranoia or employee’ state of paranoia or organizational paranoia began to gain consideration in management in the 1980’s (Berrios, 2009) as cited in (Ihionkhan and Ohue, 2018) and other fields of study like social psychology amongst others. To this end, a few definitions of organizational paranoia have been given from management and social psychology perspective.

The American Psychiatric Association (1980) ^[6] defines paranoia as the belief that people are conspiring against you and deliberately trying to harm you. However, Goodtherapy (2018) says paranoia tends to be a symptom of a mental health condition rather than a diagnosis in itself. Some of the symptoms you can expect to see if you are suffering from paranoia include an intense and even irrational lack of trust or even suspicion about something or someone (Madelene, 2019). It is important to align with the remarks of Galdini cited in Monyei, Agbaeze and Isichei (2020) that a common trigger of individual paranoia is fear and lack of trust. Fenigstein and Vanable (1992) posit that paranoia is the tendency to be inappropriately suspicious of other people’s motives and behaviours directed towards oneself. This infers that not all suspicions are paranoia, there are justified suspicions. For example, at the early outbreak of Corona virus in Nigeria those who returned from China on national assignment being discussed as seen coughing, sneezing and having difficulty in breathing does not amount to paranoia.

Paranoia is thus, inherent in human nature and it is a psychological problem which is hidden and comes out in certain circumstances. This is due to the individual’s feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and lack of confidence, fear and a host of other complex feelings while working in an organization (Subramanian, 2017) ^[43]. From the foregoing definitions, paranoia is a common human experience. They agree on unique characteristics of fear, anxiety, suspicion, loss of trust, bias in attribution, and perceived abuse. Thus, this study conceptualized organizational paranoia from the dysfunctional social interaction and social uncertainty perspective in the organization (Kramer, 2001) ^[25]. Subramanian (2017) ^[43] in his wisdom remarked that paranoia prevails where rumors, gossips and hear says’ thrive against the accepted routes of formal communication. Efforts to solve issues at meetings will not arrive at solutions as issues are no longer openly analyzed and discussed. This will equally give rise to an unhealthy interpersonal relationship with mutual distrust and suspicion within the organization that would lead to unresolved organizational issues while operations will move away from once open or obvious way.

Organizational paranoia is a kind of distrustful behaviour by the employees arising out of suspicions and distorted actions of organizational intentions (Subramanian, 2017) ^[43], thus, organizational paranoia is a problem rooted in organizational behaviour, which requires care and adequate understanding particularly the informational and social environment within which the behavior is secured and thrives. Paranoid cognition may be the first of its kind of irrational distrust and suspicion. He stated that the harmful effects of paranoid cognition on judgments about distrust and suspicion of others in the workplace can be viewed from two vintage points. First, they can be approved from the perspective of how they affect perceiver’s presumptive behaviour of co-workers (that is, a priori expectations about others trustworthiness). Second, they can be approved from the perspective of the effect of attribution they make about others observed behaviour.

Organizational culture and organizational paranoia

Paranoia as a science of culture, society, and organization is not a broadly shared view because traditionally it is seen as a term from the medical sciences and human pathology (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) ^[7] to that extent, limiting its relevance to the applicability of the insights gathered around clinical research (Siever, 2006). However, paranoia as a human phenomenon is observed as a feeling of excessive distress or concern over

a person's future (Abdul' Aal, 2008) ^[1]. Following the persistence or continuation of this feeling, it dominates the individual's thought processes and mental state; degenerates into a general suspicious disorder. This condition, in the view of Alqahtani and Alajmi (2010) ^[5] is characterized by the absence of control over thought processes, and in turn results in thinking symptoms that are likely to interfere with the person's daily routines. This is not far from the position of Baruch and Lambert (2007) who describe organizational paranoia as the effect of combined negative emotions and a physiological provocation that involves complex behaviours. Freeman and Freeman (2008) ^[16] speculated that paranoia is actually increasing in modern western society, citing reasons such as migration, urbanization, victimization, trauma and social isolation. They are also linked to the trend to mistrust of authority and the effect of the media on people's perception of risk. This view again supports the paradigm shift from the paranoid individual to paranoia as a wider societal, cultural and even political issue. It is against this background, the relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia became imperative. Amidst several definitions and views, Agwu (2014) ^[4] describes organizational culture as the set of shared values, beliefs and norms that influence the way employees think, feel and behave in the workplace. Culture permeates every part of an organization's operation. It is like the air that employees breathe every moment they are at work (McKinley and Williamson, 2010) ^[28]. Organizational culture is not just for a competitive advantage, it has become a *sine qua non* for organizational success, allowing companies to attract and retain top employees (Sadir and Lees, 2001) ^[39].

The nature of organizational culture contributes to employees' perceptions about their own individual possibility of influencing or impacting what occurs within the workplace. In a positive, motivating environment, employees feel free to give their best effort because they believe that it will yield constructive results. In a negative, debilitating environment, employees are very guarded and cautious about what they would like to do because of the sense of fear and anxiety that exists, (McKinley and Williamson, 2010) ^[28] as fallout of trust and respect. The level of trust that employees feel exists within the organization dictates how they respond. This includes the demonstrations of trust that occur up and down the organizational hierarchy. Moreso, the level of respect that is exhibited for what each individual stands for, what he or she contributes as well as what each could be capable of contributing as critical components of the organization's culture. If culture provides a context in which social perception and learning occur, then some cultures may lack socio-cultural mechanisms to more effectively cope with the consequences of fear, anxiety and distrust like aggressive acts, and as a result, be more conducive to aggressive behaviour. Attribution of hostile intent is considered as a key element in the development and persistence of aggressive behaviour (Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch and Monshouwer cited in Berderlioglu, 2016). Insults and threats in honour cultures result in heightened anger and aggressive reaction towards one causing the provocation (Mosquera, Manstead and Fisher; Faqir; Nisbett; Sever and Yurdakul; Cohen, Vandello, Puente and Rantilla and Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle and Schwarz cited in Berderlioglu, 2016). It follows that the degree to which people attribute hostile intent and blameworthiness in the negative action of others and display anger and aggression as a result of this negative interaction differ in distinct cultures, namely individualistic collectivistic and honor-societies.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger (1957). Cognitive dissonance theory is about a feeling of discomfort that arise when a person's opinion, attitude, knowledge, belief, values or behaviour conflicts his or her values, and belief or when the person has to face new information that is contrary to his or her beliefs (Sukmayadi, 2020) ^[44]. Simply put, the theory displays the disagreement between cognitions and reality. Cognitive dissonance theory is relevant to this work as it is useful in predicting and dealing with workforce's opinions, behaviours, attitudes or beliefs that could produce information which dictates ways organizations operate or perform particular things that influence employees in the organization. That is how they perceive, respond, act or react to events, people, things, processes, policies or practices.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population encompassed two thousand, eight hundred and eighty-five (2,885) construction workers from four (4) construction companies in South-East, Nigeria. They include: Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Hartland Construction Company Nigeria Limited, Reynolds Construction Company and Arab Contractors Nigeria Limited. Systematic sampling technique was used to draw from the population. The sample size of 351 was determined using the Taro Yamena (1967) sample determination formula. The sample size for each construction company was subsequently estimated using Bowley's Proportional Allocation Technique formula (Dike, Ehikwe and Onwuka, 2013) ^[14]. Primary data were collected, using a two-section structured, self-administered survey questionnaire. Section A comprised of Personal Data while Section B comprised of organizational culture and organizational paranoia set on a 5-point Scale, weighted 1-5: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of the constructs. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data for the study. The data generated was retrieved, analyzed and the hypothesis tested using Spearman Rank Correlation on the platform of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0. Coefficients were used to interpret data. Spearman rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was used to measure the relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia.

Analysis and discussion of findings

Participants Demographic Information

Table 1: Gender Status of Participant Frequency Percent Valid Percent Cumulative Percent

Valid Male	198	72.8	72.8		72.8
Female	74	27.2	27.2		100.0
Total	272	100.0		100.0	

As shown in table 1, large proportions of 72.8 of the participants are male while 27.2 are female.

Table 2: Spearman's Rank Correlation of Organizational Culture and Organizational Paranoia

			Organizational Culture	Organizational Paranoia
Spearman's rho	Organizational Culture	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.863*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	272	272
	Organizational Paranoia	Correlation Coefficient	.863*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	272	272

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

Source: Research Data, 2021.

The above table shows a positive significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia with a rho value of 0.863. This indicates that there is 86.3 percent explanation of the relationship between both variables, while 13.7 percent are explained by other variables not considered in this relationship. However, this statement is true as the level of significance of 0.000 is less than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and its alternative form accepted. This states that there is significant positive relationship between organizational culture and organizational paranoia in the studied construction companies in the South East, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study found organizational culture having positive and significant relationship with organizational paranoia in construction companies in South East, Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, a specific recommendation is made in tandem with the objective of the study:

1. Organizations need to promote the hallmarks of corporate governance in the company to reduce distrust and suspicion and enhance optimum contribution from the workers. Also Company polices need not to be shrouded in secrecy so that at entry employees understand the terms and conditions guiding their service as well as the rules and regulations guiding the operations of the company.

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