

Mediating effect of psychological ownership on the relationship of servant leadership and organizational citizenship: a conceptual model

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ABSTRACT: This is a conceptual study that proposes examining a mediated model of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among employees of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) Plc. The PHCN Plc is a sole producer and distributor of electricity in Nigeria and plays a vital role in supporting the socio-economic development of Nigeria. If performance of OCB is enhanced among employees of this utility organization, effective functioning of the organization and ultimate realization of its goals and objectives will also be enhanced. Extensive review of relevant literature was done for better understanding of the current development of research involving OCB, servant leadership and psychological ownership that constitute the model of this study. Cross sectional and survey study will be employed as methods for data collection. One stage cluster sampling technique will be employed to obtain representative response from a sample of 322 lower and middle level employees of Kano PHCN Distribution Company. A combination of both descriptive and inferential statistics will be employed to test the hypothesized model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used in the analysis because of its analytical power of testing several relationships simultaneously and reducing measurement error.

Keywords: *organizational citizenship behavior, servant leadership, psychological ownership, Nigeria.*

1. INTRODUCTION

One central area of concern among organizational theorists and practitioners is organizational effectiveness. One of the good mechanisms for achieving organizational effectiveness is the employees' willingness to perform their duties beyond the formal specifications of job roles often described as extra-role or discretionary behaviors (Organ, 1990). Increasing number of research on employee's discretionary work behaviors signifies the importance of this construct for the success of organizations. Multiple conceptualizations of discretionary employee work behaviors exist in the literature (e.g., pro-social organizational behavior, extra role behavior, contextual performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Organ's (1988) conceptualization of OCB has received major research attention as compared to other conceptualizations of discretionary employee behaviors (Van Dyne, Cummings & Parks, 1995).

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are behaviors that are not mandatory on the employees to carry out, but are helpful to the organization's effectiveness and goal attainment (Organ, 1988). In his words, Organ (1988, p. 4) defines organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as "behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient functioning of the organization". Organizational citizenship behaviors are usually performed by employees to support the interests of the organization even though they may not directly lead to employee benefits (Moorman &

Blakely, 1995). However, Organ (1988) acknowledges that OCB could have a beneficial cumulative effect for an individual employee and that the employee might be considering the long-term benefits.

Employee OCB also benefits organizations directly or indirectly. Direct organizational benefits include volunteerism, assistance between coworkers, and unusual employee attendance to an important meeting, employee's punctuality and active participation in organizational affairs (Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990). While the indirect benefit involves lubricating the social machinery of the organization (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Also Katz (1964) considered such discretionary behavior essential for strong organizational social systems. He posited that the organizations gain a measure of systemic resiliency from the small, spontaneous acts of selfless sensitivity, cooperation, and uncompensated contribution.

Employees exhibit OCBs in various situations. They exhibit OCBs when they help fellow workers who have difficulty in performing their work; when they exhibit endurance and perseverance in performing their jobs; when they avoid doing things or saying things that tarnish the image of their organization; when they spend extra time to achieve objectives; when they perform their job beyond requirements; and generally when they show extra concern about success of their organizations (Organ, 1988). From these scenarios it is clear that OCB could contribute to organizational performance in many ways. Podsakoff, Ahearne and MacKenzie (1997) argue that OCB has potential to enhance organizational performance through lubricating the social machinery of the organization, reducing friction, and increasing efficiency. OCB may also contribute to organizational success by enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, promoting better use of scarce resources, improving coordination, strengthening the organization's ability to attract and retain better employees, reducing variability of performance, and enabling better adaptation to environmental changes (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). It has also been reported that OCB increases job satisfaction among employees (Mohammad, Habib, & Alias, 2011). Furthermore, research demonstrates that OCB can be an important resource to improve organizational performance in complex work environments demanding team oriented work practices (Organ, Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 2006).

Despite the extant OCB literature, more studies are still warranted. OCB studies are still needed because organizations need to continuously understand different mechanisms for achieving and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Consistent with the need for more OCB studies, Ahmadi (2010) revealed that successful organizations depend on employees who will do more than their usual job duties and provide performance that is beyond expectations. Hence, in line with the need for continuous OCB research, the present study attempts to extend the literature by exploring the role of servant leadership on employee via the mediating influence of psychological ownership.

This study extends previous research (Organ et al., 2006) by examining the mediating process underlying the relationship between servant leadership and employee OCB. Organ et al. (2006) revealed that the relationship between servant leadership behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors could be enhanced by considering mediating factors. Therefore, this study attempts to further investigate the relationship of servant leadership and OCB via the mediating effect of subordinates' psychological ownership.

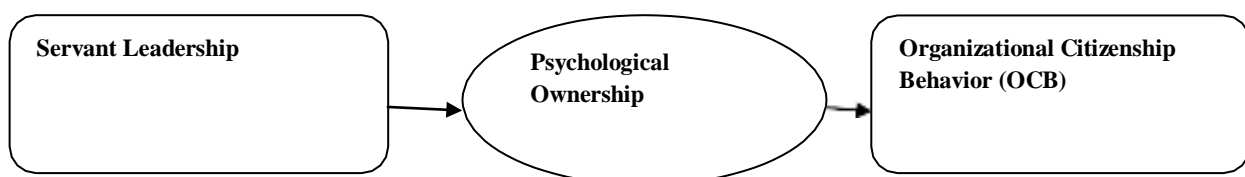


Figure 1: Proposed Model of Servant Leadership, Psychological Ownership and OCB

3. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) was widely used to underpin OCB by most researchers (Cohen & Kol , 2004; Jawahar, & Carr, 2007; Skarlicki, & Latham, 1997; Zoghbi-Manrique de Lara, 2008). The fundamental basis of social exchange theory is that relationships providing more benefits than costs will yield enduring mutual trust and attraction (Blau, 1964). These social transactions encompass both material benefits (i.e. salaries, bonuses, and allowances) and psychological rewards (i.e. status, loyalty and approval) (Yukl, 1994). Central to both social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity is the concept of unspecified obligations. Unspecified obligations denote human behavior that when one individual party does a favor to another, there exists an expectation of some future return from the other individual party. These obligations maybe enacted in the form of citizenship behaviors and over time, a pattern of reciprocity evolves, resulting in perceived balance in the exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Rousseau, 1989). Citizenship behaviors are more likely to be under an individual's control, and hence more likely to be a salient mode of reciprocation (Organ, 1990).

Exchange relationships with the organization and with one's immediate supervisor are of great significance to subordinate employees (Jawahar, & Carr, 2007). Based on the previously mentioned theorem of unspecified obligations which is central to both the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, employees' exchange relationship with the organization is influenced greatly by unspecified obligations. Some good mechanisms for these unspecified obligations to develop for employees are through servant leadership and psychological ownership for the organization. Specifically, with reference to employees' exchange relationship with one's supervisor, perceptions of unspecified obligations could develop through servant leadership. Additionally, with respect to employees' exchange relationship with the organization, perceptions of unspecified obligations could develop through the feeling of ownership for the organization (psychological ownership for the organization). Therefore, employee OCB can be as a result of satisfaction with organizational leadership style and the sense of ownership for the organization employees experience in the course of their normal day-to-day relationships with organization. This study is concerned with investigating these symbiotic relationships between the organization and employees.

4. METHOD

4.1. Participants

Data for this study will be obtained from a sample consisting of 322 employees of Kano PHCN Distribution Companies. Expected participants include all middle and lower class workers who report to another superior. This is important because this study is about testing servant leadership abilities of superior workers and how they influence employee OCBs. Participants will be personally contacted and be requested to anonymously complete a four-page questionnaire that consists of 54 items. The researcher and employed assistants will go back for collection of the completed questionnaires at intervals of time.

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Organizational citizenship behaviors

The engagement in extra role activities by members of the organization will be measured using the Williams and Anderson's (1991) instrument that consists of 14 items. Internal scale reliabilities of .78 and .74 have been reported regarding OCB-I and OCB-O respectively (Shin, 2012). A sample item is I help others who have heavy workloads and I assist supervisor with his/her work (when not asked).

4.2.2. Servant leadership

Leadership that values people, develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, provides leadership and shares leadership (Laub, 1999) will be measured using Liden et al.'s (2008) servant leadership instrument. The instrument has internal scale reliability of .89 (Liden et al., 2008). A sample item is my manager makes my career development a priority and my manager is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.

4.2.3. Psychological ownership

Developing feelings of ownership for a variety of objects, material and immaterial in nature, psychological ownership will be measured using Van Dyne and Pierce (2004). The internal scale reliability of .83 has been reported for the psychological ownership instrument (Chi & Han, 2008). A sample item is I sense that this is MY Company and I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization.

5. CONCLUSION

Primarily, this study is an attempt to respond to previous studies' call for testing additional mediators on the relationship between servant leadership and OCB. At a secondary level, this study is an attempt to establish the enhanced effect of servant leadership on employee OCB. The study has both practical and theoretical significance. For the first time this study will investigate the mediating effect of psychological ownership on the relationship between servant leadership and OCB. Practically, the study will provide insight to professional managers about additional techniques of influencing employee positive behaviors such as OCBs without necessarily mandating them formally by their job requirements.

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