



Interpersonal Justice and Employee Commitment of Mobile Telecommunication Companies in Port Harcourt

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Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between interpersonal justice and employee commitment in mobile telecommunication in Port Harcourt. A cross sectional survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 270 (Two Hundred and Seventy) employees of the 5 selected mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 161 was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used in assessing the reliability of the instrument adopted. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 23.0. The test on the hypotheses showed that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justice and measures of employee commitment in mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. The study recommends that management of telecommunication companies should treat their employees with equal respect and fairness to avoid breaches in employees' emotional commitment to their duties.*

Keywords: *Interpersonal Justice, Employee commitment, Affective Commitment Normative Commitment.*

INTRODUCTION

Employees are the subject of decisions virtually every day of their organizational lives (Colquitt, 2001). In organizational settings, justice is not always administered through fair allocation of employment resources, provision of clear and adequate explanations for decisions made and employees are not always treated with dignity and respect during the implementation of policies and procedures (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Adoption of effective human resource management (HRM) practices in many organizations is often low in the list of management priority (Batti, 2014) because these organizations discourages investment in human resource capacities and staff retention measures due to the nature of their industry, funding constraints and subsequent short term employment practices. This in turn leads to negative justice perceptions and commitment. (Padaki, 2007). Many contemporary writings on organizations emphasize the importance of core values to the organization (Collins & Porras, 1997). Justice in terms of fair treatment of employees is identified as one of those values and fairness as one of the fundamental bases of cooperative action in organizations (Cropanzano, Bowen & Gilliland, 2007).

Commitment to an organization which is in the literature referred to as organizational commitment is the bond employees experience with their organization (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Employees who are committed to their organization generally feel a connection with the organization, feel that they fit in it, feel they understand it and are committed to the goals of

the organization (Cohen *et al.*, 2001). The added value of such employees is that they tend to be more determined in their work, they contribute relatively to high productivity and are more proactive in offering their support (Konovsky, 2000). Meyer & Allen (1997) conceptualized employee commitment (organizational commitment) in three dimensions namely affective, continuance and normative commitments.

Justice perceptions can influence employee attitudes and behaviour for good or ill, in turn having a positive or negative impact on individual, group and the entire organization's performance and success (Baldwin, 2006). Empirical evidence supports the notion that an employee's perception of organizational justice affects their attitude toward the organization (Konovsky, 2000). If the perception of organizational justice is positive, individuals tend to be more satisfied and committed to their job (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992).

Employees who perceive organizational decisions and procedures, treatment by others and informational basis of decision making as unfair are known to be less committed to the organization (Baldwin, 2006). They engross themselves with and engage in negative or unproductive psychological and physical withdrawal behaviour. Psychological withdrawal consists of actions that provide a mental escape from the work environment. It is manifested through such actions as daydreaming, socializing, looking busy, moonlighting and cyber loafing. Physical withdrawal behaviour consists of actions that provide a physical escape, whether short term or long term, from the work environment. These include tardiness, long breaks, missing targets, deadlines, meetings, absenteeism and quitting (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between interpersonal justice and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Several empirical studies have been conducted that have examined the relationship between organizational justice and employee commitment in different countries. Gulluce, Ozer and Erkilic (2015) examined the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational justice perceptions of employees working in private healthcare institutions in Van province found that distributive justice has a statistically significant correlation with commitment of the healthcare employees. This study concluded that the most important ways to increase the commitment of employees is for the executives to be fair to their employees. For this reason, it is possible to increase their commitment through the development of their justice perceptions towards the management (Gulluce, *et. al.*, 2015). Other studies were conducted in advanced countries hence a gap exists which this study addresses by examining the relationship between organizational justice and employee commitment in the mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

The study was also guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment of employees in the mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?
- ii. What is the relationship between interpersonal justice and normative commitment of employees in the mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?
- iii. What is the relationship between interpersonal justice and continuance commitment of employees in the mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?

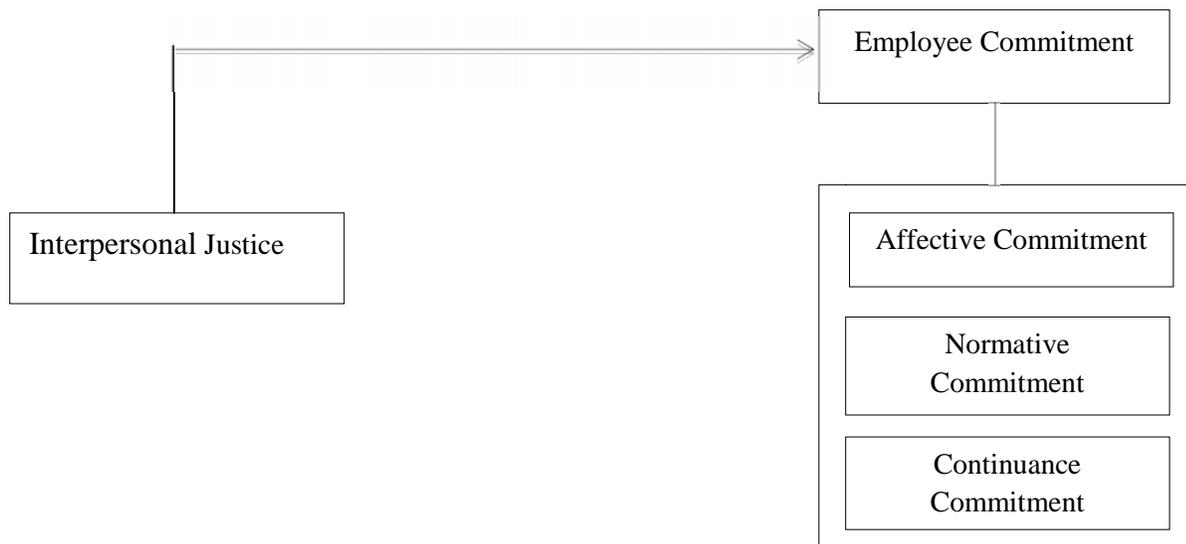


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of interpersonal justice and employee commitment.

Source: Desk Research, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Justice Judgment Theory

According to Leventhal (1980), individuals attempt to make fair allocation decisions by applying several possible allocation rules to the situations they confront. In his justice judgment theory, Leventhal describes how people proactively employ justice norms to rationalize administrative decision-making in resource allocation and introduces six measures of procedural justice. These include consistency across people and time, free from bias, accuracy of information used in decision making, existence of some mechanism to correct flawed decisions, conforming to standards of ethics and morality and inclusion of opinion of various groups involved in the decision process.

According to the model, individuals evaluate allocation procedures used by decision makers based on the situation, in effect proactively employing various justice norms such as equity, needs, and equality (Leventhal, 1980). Skarlicki and Folger (1997), explain the consequences of procedural justice. They argue that individuals accept responsibility for their problems if they perceive that fair procedures were used to arrive at decision outcomes. However, if they perceive that procedures used by the organization are unfair, individuals may show anger and resentment and consequently enter into retaliating behaviours. According to Cropanzano *et al.* (2001), employee perceptions of fairness in treatment and procedures enhance their commitment and desirability of long term ongoing relationship with the

organization. Also, procedural justice is expected to increase perceptions of organizational support, which, in turn, increase organizational commitment (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2001).

Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal justice is a compliment of procedural justice (Aydin & Kepenekci, 2008). Interpersonal justice focuses on the aspects of interpersonal and group communication (Mirmohamdi & Marefat, 2014) where certain behaviors are recognized as fair whereas other behaviors are considered as inappropriate and unfair. According to Greenberg and Beron (2008) interpersonal justice means people's perceptions of the fairness of the manner in which they are treated by others, especially those in authority. Interpersonal justice as argued by Colquitt *et al.* (2001) is the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authority figures involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes.

The decision maker treatment in an organization is very important for those affected by such decision. Decision makers should give respect to others, be truthful, courteous, and ready to give reasonable explanation of their decision and open a two way communication (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). According to Greenberg and Colquitt (2005), if the supervisor of an employee explained the situation and reason of say a layoff of that employee in a careful and sensitive manner, it resulted in positive feeling in the mind of the leaving employee, who considered layoff as fair and would not sue that organization for wrongful termination. This explains the importance of interpersonal justice, the way one is treated in the organization by authority figures is necessary for the goodwill of the organization.

The experience of interpersonal justice can alter reactions to decision outcomes, because sensitivity can make people feel better about an unfavorable outcome (Mohamed, 2014). Mohamed noted that interpersonal treatment includes interpersonal communication, truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions, justification, honesty, courtesy, timely feedback, and respect for rights.

Chuang, Lee and Shen (2014) conducted a study on multilevel perspective on the relationship between interpersonal justice and negative feedback-seeking, data involving 690 employees showed that individual-level interpersonal justice was related to employee negative feedback-seeking behaviour. Negative feedback-seeking behaviour refers to an effort to obtain information about inadequacies in work behavior and work performance (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007). The finding of this study is consistent with the justice literature, which has found that interpersonal justice is associated with supervisor-related outcomes (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001).

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is an important aspect in human resource management literature. It refers to the state in which employees sense loyalty with their respective organization and align themselves with organizational goals and objectives (Lambert, Hogan & Griffin, 2007). The success of an organization depends on the commitment of employees toward the organization. Herman and Armanu (2013) argue that commitment towards an organization is more than just a formal membership but rather it encompasses the attitude to the organization and a willingness to pursue all things for the sake of the organization. Employee commitment helps managers in programming, improving job performances and in decreasing frequency of absenteeism from duty (Somayyeh, Mohsen & Zahed, 2013). On the other hand, having a

committed staff provides a background for improvement and expansion of the organization, while the personnel with little or no commitment to the organization remain indifferent towards the goals and overall success of the organization (Somayyeh, Mohsen, & Zahed, 2013).

Measures of Employee Commitment

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is defined as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement that an employee has with his or her organization (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2011). It is the positive emotional attachment that employees feel for the organization because they see their goals and values to be congruent with those of the organization. Meyer and Allen (1997), note that employees retain membership out of choice and this is their commitment to the organization. Employees, who are affectively committed, strongly identify with the goals of the organization and desire to remain a part of the organization. These employees commit to the organization because they want to (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2011). The concept of affective commitment is linked to the idea that strongly committed persons identify with, are involved in, and enjoy membership in an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is the commitment that people believe they have to the organization or their feeling of obligation to their workplace. It refers to the employee's feeling of duty, loyalty or obligation to the organization (Wasti, 2003). These feelings may derive from many sources. For example, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels a 'moral' obligation to put forth effort on the job and stay with the organization to 'repay the debt.' It may also reflect an internalized norm, developed before the person joins the organization through family or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2011). In normative commitment an individual is willing to stay within an organization and contribute to an organization to correspond with a group norm (Dixit & Bhati, 2012).

Interpersonal Justice and Employee Commitment

Interpersonal justice focuses on the aspects of interpersonal and group communication (Mirmohamdi & Marefat, 2014) where certain behaviors are recognized as fair whereas other behaviors are considered as inappropriate and unfair. According to Greenberg and Beron (2008) interpersonal justice means people's perceptions of the fairness of the manner in which they are treated by others, especially those in authority. Interpersonal justice as argued by Colquitt *et al.* (2001) is the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authority figures involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes.

Greenberg's (2010) work on interpersonal justice, focused on the manner of communication and treatment of supervisor to his subordinate and how this affected resource allocation and decision making within the organization, while informational looks at honesty, and timely explanation and justification on the resource allocation and procedure in deciding the allocation proportion. Therefore, interpersonal justice evolved from interactional justice. Some researchers such as Choi (2011); Georgalis, Samaratunge, Kimberley and Lu (2014), and Tam (1998) focused in interpersonal justice that also considered the manner of persons being treated by supervisors and thereafter evaluated informational fairness separately.

Interpersonal fairness perceptions have been shown to affect individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Verbal and passive forms of aggression, such as yelling, bullying, and humiliation have a negative impact on peoples' perceived justice, (Gurbuz & Mert, 2009). Interpersonal justice therefore demonstrates the extent to which people are treated with graciousness, poise and esteem by those involved in the execution of procedures or outcome determination (Colquitt, 2001).

Research has shown that people experiencing positive interpersonal fairness treatment tend to accept unpleasant outcomes as being fair and hold positive feelings about their supervisors (Cohen- Charash & Spector, 2001). Importantly, such individuals are less inclined to sue their former employers on the grounds of wrongful termination than those who believe they were treated in an opposite manner (Greenberg, 1987). An empirical study by Skarlicki and Latham (1996) found that when union leaders were trained to behave more justly by providing explanations and apologies and treating people they were overseeing with courtesy and respect, the individuals who reported to the trained leaders were more supportive and cooperative than individuals working under untrained union leaders. In his empirical study (Greenberg, 1993) found that pay cut decisions were accompanied by lower rates of company theft and turnover when they were explained in details and in a respectful way. Taxpayers were found to be more compliant with tax laws when they felt they were treated fairly and respectfully by the tax authority (Wenzel, 2006).

Additionally, Hamlett (2014) had reported that the interpersonal model could make up the shortcoming of the gap of distributive justice and procedural justice. One possible scenario that could demonstrate how interpersonal justice make up the gap is, say a long service employee was being relocated to another business outlet that is more remote from the current one without his involvement in the decision-making process (procedural injustice) and no additional incentive or allowance is given (distributive justice) to him. He would have felt anger, disappointment and aggression. And he is likely to go against the decision or merely go along but work with low morale and low organizational commitment. Worst case scenario would be him quitting from the job making a loss to the company. This could have a high negative impact on the organization because. Nevertheless, should the manager of the employee be sensitive and concerned toward the employee. Showing consideration on the view and thinking of the employee and allowing him or her to voice this dissatisfaction with the manager, there is a better chance of reaching a healthy compromise.

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and normative commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and continuance commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 270 (Two Hundred and Seventy) employees of the 5 selected mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 161 was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used in assessing the reliability of the instrument adopted. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 23.0.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation matrix for interpersonal justice and employee commitment

		Interpersonal Justice	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment	
Spearman's rho	Interpersonal Justice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.774**	.718**	.409**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	131	131	131	131
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.774**	1.000	.952**	.853**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	131	131	131	131
	Continuance Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.718**	.952**	1.000	.930**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	131	131	131	131
	Normative Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.409**	.853**	.930**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	131	131	131	131

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

Table 1 illustrates the test for the three previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment. The rho value 0.774 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a very strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant

relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and continuance commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justice and continuance commitment. The ρ value 0.718 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a moderate correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between distributive justice and continuance commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal justice and normative commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between interpersonal justice and normative commitment. The ρ value 0.409 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a moderate correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justice and normative commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study findings reveal that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justice and employee commitment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This finding agrees with previous findings that the experience of interpersonal justice can alter reactions to decision outcomes, because sensitivity can make people feel better about an unfavorable outcome (Mohamed, 2014). Mohamed continues to note that interpersonal treatment includes interpersonal communication, truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions, justification, honesty, courtesy, timely feedback, and respect for rights.

Chuang, Lee and Shen (2014) conducted a study on multilevel perspective on the relationship between interpersonal justice and negative feedback-seeking, data involving 690 employees showed that individual-level interpersonal justice was related to employee negative feedback-seeking behavior. Negative feedback-seeking behavior refers to an effort to obtain information about inadequacies in work behavior and work performance (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007). The finding of this study is consistent with the justice literature, which has found that interpersonal justice is associated with supervisor-related outcomes (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001).

Interpersonal justice perceptions have been noted to increase individuals' intention to support the decisions made by authorities (Greenberg, 1993). Because interpersonal justice emphasizes one on-one transactions, employees often seek it from their supervisors. Interpersonal justice is also determined by the formal policies and procedures of an organization (Tyler & Huo, 2002.) The proper enactment of work place procedures is defined by five behaviours: adequate consideration of the employee's input, suppression of personal

biases, and consistent application of decision-making criteria, timely feedback and justification for a decision (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). These factors play an important role in affecting employees' perceptions of fairness, acceptance of decisions, and attitudes toward the organization (Colquitt, 2001).

Work place practices which reveal fair interpersonal justice treatment of employees include appropriate justification of decisions (through genuine efforts to explain the results of decisions); honesty (through avoidance of deception); propriety (through absence of prejudicial statements and inappropriate questions); and respect (sincere and deferential treatment of individuals as well as the absence of personal attacks (Gurbuz & Mert, 2009). Decision makers are said to behave in an interpersonally fair manner when they treat those affected by their decisions properly and enact decisions, policies or procedures fairly (Folger & Konovsky, 1989).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Employees are the subject of decisions virtually every day of their organizational lives. In organizational settings, justice is not always administered through fair allocation of employment resources, provision of clear and adequate explanations for decisions made and employees are not always treated with dignity and respect during the implementation of policies and procedures. This study therefore concludes that interpersonal justice significantly influences employee commitment. Specifically, the study concludes that:

Interpersonal justice significantly influences employee affective commitment of mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Also, interpersonal justice significantly influences employee continuance commitment of mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Finally, interpersonal justice significantly influences employee normative commitment of mobile telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

The study made the following recommendations:

- i. Management of telecommunication companies should treat their employees with equal respect and fairness to encourage employees' emotional (affective) commitment to their duties.
- ii. Management of telecommunication companies should train its leaders and supervisors to treat employees with graciousness, poise and deep sense of respect in the execution of procedure in order to enhance normative commitment.
- iii. It is important for employers to provide employees with fairness in interpersonal justice in order reap the positive outcomes of highly committed employees especially with regards to employees exhibiting continuance commitment.

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