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Research Article

EXPLORING UPWARD INFLUENCE STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN NIGERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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Abstract

Prior studies report that citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees within organizations lead to improved growth and performance, however while several antecedents such as leaders' behavior is known to influence OCB, the effect of upward influence strategies adopted by subordinates have not featured prominently in the literature. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between upward influence strategies and organizational citizenship behavior. 221 randomly selected employees of Ughelli North Local Government Council participated in the study. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents at place of work and retrieved thereafter. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Findings indicate that OCB was positively and significantly related to soft upward influence strategy, while hard upward influence strategy was negatively and significantly related to OCB. The study recommends that soft upward influence strategy should be adopted by employees as this will enhance OCB at the Local Government Councils.

Keywords: Organizational citizenship behaviour; Soft upward influence strategies, Hard upward influence strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The art of influencing attitudes and behaviours have been rampant over time across organizations irrespective of size and type. The achievement of both individual and organizational objectives has been hinged on the extent to which the human resources (superiors and subordinates) in an organization are influenced. This point to the fact that the ability to influence serves as a vital determining factor to an organization's effectiveness. That is, influencing subordinates, superiors and colleagues may lead to more access to resources, more information and higher remunerations. Hence, the type of behaviour an individual uses to influence the attitude or behaviour of another individual is referred to as 'influence tactic or strategy' (Yukl, Seifert & Chavez, 2008;Alshenaifi& Clarke, 2014).

According to Chaturvedi and Srivastava (2014), influence strategy can be understood as an effort by an individual to change the attitude or thinking of another individual in order to achieve a particular goal. This influence can be exerted from a superior to a subordinate (downward) or from a subordinate to a superior (upward) or from a subordinate to a subordinate (horizontal). Upward influence can thus be defined as the effort to influence an individual who is in a higher position in the official hierarchy of authority in an organization (Porter, Robert & Harold, as cited in Masood, Shafique, Ahmad & Mansoor, 2015). In a more recent definition, Aruoren (2020)

described upward influence strategy as the tactics which a subordinate uses to sway or change the attitude or behaviour of superior higher in the organizational hierarchy to achieve an objective. These definitions imply that in the process of applying influence strategy, there are two major players: the one exerting the influence (the agent) and the one being influenced (the target).

Upward influence tactics can be classed into three main categories – strong, weak, and rational which were later renamed as hard, soft, and rational strategies (Masood, Shafique, Ahmad & Mansoor, 2015). As explained by Xuhong (2020), the hard tactics has to do with those strategies that do not give the 'target' the liberty to comply without suffering a certain level of cost, while the soft tactics are less hostile and manipulative. Some examples of hard strategies include pressure, legitimization, assertiveness, and coalition while the soft tactics include personal appeal, ingratiation, and consultation. The rational tactics, on the other hand, involve the adoption of reason and sensible bartering in a non-emotional manner. It allows more room in deciding whether to accept the influence or not. An example of this tactic is rational persuasion, which is usually very effective when mixed with the soft strategies (Xuhong, 2020).

Understanding the influence processes of an organization will facilitate an understanding of the many facets of organizational behaviour including decision making, organizational design, communication, and motivation (Alshenaifi & Clarke, 2014). Although it is pertinent to note that influence strategies not only affects organizational behaviour (both group and individual performance and activity within an organization) but also take a toll on the organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Rauf (2016) defined OCB as those behaviours displayed by employees at the workplace, which are not described in their job descriptions but are needed for an organization's success. In their opinions, Shayista, Sabiya and Nazir (2018) described OCB to mean the participation of employees in activities and acts that are not included in the job roles of employees but are favourable to the organization as a whole.

Research Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between soft upward influence strategy and organizational citizenship behavior.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between hard upward influence strategy and organizational citizenship behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Concept of Influence

Influence is the power one person uses to persuade another to change in order to effect that other's behavior. A person's behavior, attitude, ambitions, ideas, needs, and values can all be altered through influence. A vital component of leadership is influence. It focuses on how a leader influences subordinates. A force that affects someone, something, or the course of events, especially one that acts covertly or without any visible effort.

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Leadership cannot exist without influence, which is a key component of leadership. Influence is the real alteration of a subject's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors (Bamford, 2006). Thus, it may be assessed by observing how these variables alter as a result of the leader's influence strategies. Based on the position of the influencer, influence can be categorized as upward, lateral, and downward (Lee, Yun, & Byun, 2016).

When someone in a lower position or class influences someone (the target) in a higher position or class, this is referred to as having an upward effect. The majority of top-level influence research so far has been on organizational political behaviour. Lateral influence comes next. According to Ryan & Hyun (2019), lateral influence is the method by which socialization and group dynamics lead to an agent-target connection involving peers. Agents persuade their peers to act in accordance with the standards and expectations of the group, and downward influence describes how a superior affects a subordinate based on the subordinate's position in the organizational hierarchy. In other words, exerting downward pressure could be seen as a leadership style (Lee, Yun & Byun, 2016).

1.2 Upward Influence Strategy

Upward influence is defined as an effort to persuade a person higher up in a formal organizational hierarchy of authority (Masood, Shafique, Ahmad & Mansoor, 2015). In a similar vein, Russell (2019) described Upward Influence Strategy (UIS) as an individual's attempt to persuade individuals in higher positions to comply with their wishes and to yield to desired results. These definitions indicated that two individuals the agent (the one exerting the influence) and the targets are involved in the execution of an influence plan (one being influenced). Numerous varieties of UIS have been introduced over time. For instance, the Profiles of Organizational Influence Scale (POIS) by Kipnis and Schmidt (as quoted in Kaul, 2013) had a 27-item subscale that assessed six strategy categories: rationality/reason, ingratiation, exchange/bargaining, assertiveness, coalition, and upward appeal. Similar to this, Lam, Raja, Finstrad-Milion and Desilus (2017) defined twelve (12) influence strategies: personal appeal, coalition tactics, organizational appeal, exchange, inspiring appeals, apprising, pressure, collaboration, ingratiation, and legitimizing tactics. Aruoren added 7 new influence methods in a more recent study (Aruoren, 2020), including diplomacy, individualized help, displaying expertise, manipulation, exhibiting reliance, blocking, and disobedience. It is interesting to observe that only the four most popular strategies—assertiveness, trade, rational persuasion, and ingratiation—have evidence of the effects of using UIS (Masood, Shafique, Ahmad & Mansoor, 2015).

Another development was the classification of UIS into three broad classes by Masood, Shafique, Ahmad, and Mansoor (2015). These classifications were strong, weak, and rational, which they later dubbed as hard, soft, and rational strategies. The three mega-categories of tactics were described by Xuhong (2020) in his contribution. The soft tactics are those that are less hostile and manipulative, whereas the hard tactics are those that are perceived by powerholders (agents) as denying the target person the freedom to choose whether to comply without

incurring a certain level of cost. Pressure, legitimization, assertiveness, and coalition are some instances of the hard techniques, whereas personal appeal, ingratiation, and consultation are examples of the soft strategies. On the other hand, the logical strategies call for adopting reason and reasonable bartering in a non-emotional way. It gives the option to accept or reject the influence more leeway. Rational persuasion is an illustration of this strategy, which, when combined with soft tactics, is typically quite effective (Xuhong, 2020). It is impossible to undermine the importance of UIS in organizations.

For instance, Alshenaifi and Clarke (2014) said that upward influence tactics are crucial because they influence how employees accomplish tasks that have a significant impact on the performance of an organization. According to Alshenaifi and Clarke, these strategies would manifest in how employees interact with their superiors and the standard of working relationships. According to Russell (2019), the argument for adopting UIS is only suitable for, and well appropriate to, the contemporary workplace. According to Purcell and Rainie's (2014) Peer Research Center Study, information and communication tools encourage upward influence because they make it easier to approach and reach out to those in higher positions and encourage consent to a desired outcome. This is not unrelated to the fact that the geometric rise in technology over the past decade has necessitated the call for collaboration within the work environment.

1.3 Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

In order to get their cooperation in order to accomplish the organization's goal, managers can use organizational behavior to better understand their staff members' behavior. Organization citizenship behavior (OCB) is one of the contributing behaviours that is largely optional but has been scientifically shown to promote organizational functioning (Sofiah, Padmashantini & Gengeswari, 2014). Oladipupo (2016) defined OCBs as employee behaviors that are elective and not part of their assigned job duties. According to Kandeepan (2016), OCB is defined as individual workplace behavior that contributes to the organization's overall well-being but is not immediately rewarded by the formal incentive system of the employer. According to Shayista, Sabiya, and Nazir (2018), OCB also refered to employees' involvement in tasks and deeds that are outside the scope of their normal responsibilities but are beneficial to the organization as a whole. In a similar vein, Sheeraz, Ahmad, Ishaq, and Nor (2020) defined OCB as behaviors that go outside the purview of an employee's contract requirements or job description.

The aforementioned definitions hereby imply that all OCB actions are discretionary in nature and may not always be associated with rewards (Ojebola, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau & Falola, 2020). The philosophy of OCB has been fiercely adopted in various cultures and industries, including hospitality, health, information technology, textile, banking, family business, and law enforcement agencies.

Podsakoff, Mackenzie & Podsakoff, (2016) have ascribed several merits to OCBs in organizations. The positive sides of OCBs included but are not limited to increased efficiency, stimulating the effective functioning of an

organization, knowledge sharing, organizational sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and enhanced employee productivity (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume, 2009; Wan, 2016). In addition, the act of performing extra roles augments the prescribed structure for a dynamic work environment since the OCBs are supportive ingredients for successful organizational operations (Amah, 2017). Other upsides to OCBs are: controlled feeling, renewed sense of vigour, and clarification in role ambiguity. Hence, most organizations desire that their employees exhibit OCB in their workplace especially when they are ardent in contributing to positive vibes despite their given job responsibilities (Aftab, Rashid & Ali-Shah, 2018).

Nevertheless, there are not many downsides that have been attached to OCBs. This is probably due to the fact that some scholars have resolved that these behaviours benefit both the organization and the employees. However, two major consequences were highlighted by Wijeya (2018) as the downside of OCBs in organizations. One is that employees might miss out on the behaviours, that is, engage in actions that are not always witnessed by influencers or leaders making decision. Another issue is that too much emphasis on OCB can result in employees experiencing job-related stress and work-life balance issues (Wijeya, 2018).

1.4 Empirical Studies

Masood, Shafique, Ahmad and Mansoor (2015) studied the impact of UIS on performance ratings using social network as a moderator. A descriptive (co-relational) study was undertaken for this purpose whereby 100 employees from the Pakistani hotels industry with specific emphasis on the hotels in Lahore City. The convenience sampling method was used in arriving at this 100 employees. Questionnaire was used as the research instrument and the data retrieved from the employees were analyzed using the simple percentage, mean and standard deviation; while the correlational and regression analyses were used in analyzing the formulated hypotheses. The results of the analysis revealed that UIS have a significant impact on performance ratings; and that using social network as a moderator, UIS have a more significant impact on performance ratings.

In a different survey, the factors that influence organizational citizenship behavior and employees performance with local culture moderation ”*pelagandong*” was of interest to Aponno, Brasit, Taba and Amar (2017) who revealed that the series of factors which sway organizational citizenship behaviour include personality (positive effect), transformational leadership (negative effect), and organizational justice (positive effect). Also, no mention was made of upward influence strategy as a factor that impacts on the organizational citizenship behaviour in the workplace.

Aruoren (2020) investigated the demographic antecedents of UIS in Nigerian public institutions. The elements of UIS that formed the independent variables were blocking, manipulation, showing expertise, defiance, ingratiation, rational persuasion, exchanging benefits, personalized help, showing dependency, and diplomacy. 357 employees of the Local Government Council of Delta State, Nigeria were sampled for the study. The descriptive statistics such as the frequency count and simple percentage were used to analyze the respondents’ bio-data while mean

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and standard deviation were used for the UIS outlined for the study. Linear regression was used to test for the extent to which the respondents' demographic variables influence their choice of UIS. The results of the study indicated that the popularly used strategy was rational persuasion, while the least used strategy was defiance. Gender difference was found in all the itemized UIS. Meanwhile, age showed differences in ingratiation, manipulation, personalized help, blocking, and rational persuasion. More so, married employees showed differences in manipulation, and showing expertise. In all, the study supported the notion that adoption of UIS may be influenced by demographic characteristics.

2. METHODOLOGY

Cross sectional survey research design was adopted for the study because the study space covered two different areas. The population of the study comprised of Local Government Employees in Delta State and Bayelsa State. The sample size is six hundred respondents (employees) .The multistage stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. First stage; the sample space was first stratified into two(2) based on political state (Delta and Bayelsa states). Second stage, each state (Delta and Bayelsa) is further stratified into local government areas. Third stage, Three hundred (300) employees were randomly selected from each state making a total of six hundred employees selected for the study

To ensure content validity the research instrument was validated by researchers colleagues. For reliability of the instrument, the researchers used the split-half reliability test which gave the results as OCB 0.86 (86%) ,SUI 0.88 (88%) and HUI 0.90 (90%). The data was collected through questionnaire .The researchers personally visit the selected Local Government Area Councils during the course of administrating the questionnaires. The respondents were assured of their confidentiality of their response. Data collected was analyzed via descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test hypotheses of study.

3. RESULTS

A total of 600 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to respondents at their place of work However, 510 copies of the questionnaires were completely filled and retrieved without error. This showed 85% response rate.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Distribution

Items	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	252	49%
Female	258	51%
Total	510	100%

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Age		
20 - 29 years	96	19%
30 – 39 years	125	25%
40 – 49 years	190	37%
Above 50 years	99	19%
Total	510	100%
Marital Status		
Single	133	26%
Married	327	64%
Separated	28	6%
Widowed	22	4%
Total	510	100%
Educational		
O'Level/OND/NCE**Qualification**	67	13%
Bachelor Degree	344	68%
Postgraduate Degree	99	19%
Total	510	100%
Tenure		
1 – 10 years	173	34%
11 – 20 years	244	48%
21 – 30 years	70	14%
Above 30 years	23	4%
Total	510	100%

Researchers' compilation

The result of Table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents were females having 258(51%), while males were 252 (49%). In terms of age distribution of the respondents, the result indicated that 96 (19%) of the respondents were between 20 – 29 years, 125 (25%) were between 30 – 39 years, 190 (37%) were between 40 – 49 years, while 99 (19%) were above 50 years. In terms of marital status, 133 (26%) of the respondents indicated that they

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were single, 327 (64%) were married, 28 (6%) separated, while 22 (4%) indicated they were widowed. In terms of highest educational qualification obtained by the respondents, 67 (13%) indicated that they posses O'L/OND/NCE as their highest certificate. Respondents that have bachelors' degree and postgraduate degrees were 344 (68%) and 99 (19%) respectively. Finally, in terms of the duration that respondent has worked for their organization (tenure), 173 (34%) indicated between 1-10 years, 244 (48%) indicated 11-20 years, 70(14%) indicated 21-30 years, while only 23(4%) indicated above 30 years respectively.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix among variables

Variable	Mean	Standard	OCB	SUI	HUI	Deviation
OCB	5.06	1.33				
SUI	3.81	1.11	0.68*			
HUI	1.96	1.07	-0.16*	0.12*		

Source: Researchers' compilation *$p < 0.05$

Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients among the study variables, OCB, SUI, and HUI. The correlation coefficient between the dependent variable (OCB) and independent variables (SUI, and HUI) were positive and negative and significant with r = + 0.68 and r = 0.16, $p < 0.05$ respectively. The study examined the relationship between upward influence strategy and organizational citizenship behavior. The study entails soft tactics (rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation and personal appeal) and hard tactics (exchange coalition, legitimating, and pressure) and organizational citizenship behavior of five hundred and ten (510) employees of Local Governments in Delta and Bayelsa States, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient between the dependent variable (OCB) and independent variable (SUI) was positive and significant with r = + 0.68. This result is in consonance in part with the findings Masood, Shafique, Ahmad and Mansoor (2015) who studied the impact of UIS on performance ratings using social network as a moderator and found that UIS have a significant impact on performance ratings; and that using social network as a moderator. Also, the study is partially in support by Aruoren (2020) who investigated the demographic antecedents of UIS in Nigerian public institutions found that adoption of UIS may be influenced by demographic characteristics. However, this study is not in line with Aponno, Brasit, Taba and Amar (2017) who revealed that the series of factors which sway organizational citizenship behaviour to include personality (positive effect), transformational leadership (negative effect), and organizational justice (positive effect) but no mention of upward influence strategy as a factor that impacts on the organizational citizenship behaviour in the workplace.

In the case of hypothesis 2, a negative and significant relationship was found to exist between hard upward influence strategy and organizational citizenship behavior this result agrees with the findings of Williams, *et al*, (2016). In general, this study agreed with Alshenaifi and

Clarke (2014) said that upward influence tactics are crucial because they influence how employees accomplish tasks that have a significant impact on the performance of an organization. And Purcell and Rainie's (2014) who encouraged upward influence because they make it easier to approach and reach out to those in higher positions and encourage consent to a desired outcome.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the management literature, there has been growing interest on whether influence strategies affect employees' behaviour in an organization. Notably, prior studies have assessed the role of influence in organizations while most had focused on leaders' ability to influence others. The results indicated that while soft upward influence strategy positively and significantly affects organizational citizenship behavior, the hard upward influence strategy negatively but significantly affects organizational citizenship behavior.

Overall, the study concludes that SUI is good for an organization in order to enhance organizational citizenship behavior and organizational productivity. This is because OCB controlled feeling, renewed sense of vigour, and clarification in role ambiguity. Given the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. That organizations should encourage the use of soft upward influence strategy in order to enhance organizational citizenship behavior.
2. That organizations should as a matter of fact, discourage the use of the hard upward influence strategy in order to promote organizational citizenship behaviour.

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