Organizational Ethics and Employee Productivity of Microfinance Banks

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Abstract

The study empirically examined the organizational ethics and employee productivity in Microfinance banks in Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive and correlational research designs were employed in the study. Data for this study were gathered from primary source and through structured questionnaire from the respondents of the microfinance banks in Cross River State. The study employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis to measure the relationship between the variables tested in the study. Based on the analysis of the results, the finding was summarized; thus, there was a significant relationship between organizational ethics and employee productivity. The study recommended that management should create a healthy work environment where employees can be motivated towards productivity. Also, efforts should be made to ensure and observe etiquette and ethical conduct within work centers for the expected goals of the complex organization to be attained.

Keywords: organizational ethics, integrity, organizational discipline, culture, productivity

1. Introduction

Ethics in organizations have long been associated with management scholars and business leaders in our today's society. Every organization should strive to be committed in a manner that is ethically transparent. Business ethics is a form of applied ethics that examines ethical principles and morals or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. Etuk (2009) stated that ethics is an aspect of axiology concerned with what is good, what is beautiful and what is desired or preferred human conduct. Ethics is concerned with contemporary norms or standards of conduct that govern the relationship among human beings and their institution. Ethical behavior can bring significant benefits to a business and keep the company's share price high, thereby protecting the business, attract more employees willing to work for the company, in the process reducing recruitment costs and this enables the company favor the most talented employees (Gabriel, 2019). In addition, ethics attract customers to the firm's products and services, thereby stimulating sales and profits; make employees want to retain with the company thereby increasing productivity. The use of ethics in business has revolutionized the way people do business. Ethical behavior is characterized by sincerity, fairness and equity in interpersonal, academic and professional relationships and it respects the dignity, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups of people.

Therefore, for an organization to move forward in the aspect of performance, it is however important for such an organization to have a good understanding of ethics and take it seriously as this can undermine the competitive strength of the organization and the society. In recent times, most organizations have come up with codes of ethics in dealing with ethical issues challenging them (Captain & Ofurum, 2019). Certainly then, the revelations of corporate malpractice should not be interpreted to mean that thinking about ethics in business situations is

entirely redundant. Ethics is normally considered as a set of mental and inner attributes of human being, it is also manifested as the behaviors arising from the inner moods of human being and it is defined through its effects. Continuing a specific behavior, the reason is that this behavior is an internal root in the depth of one's soul called mood and ethics. Ethics is also considered at individual behaviors limit. However, when individual behaviors are prevalent in society or social institutions, they are turned into a type of collective ethics rooted in the society culture (Tulayi, 2018). Ethics philosophy indicates philosophical issues regarding ethics including three fields of meta-ethics, normative ethics and applied ethics (Ronaghi & Feizi, 2012). Ethics is a set of ethical principles and standards directing behavior. The improvement of ethics in banking sector plays essential role on improving the quality of services and increasing the organizations in public (Gabriel, 2019). If work ethics are present in the work life of human being, working will be good with job satisfaction and self-actualization on one hand and people satisfaction and actualization and development of works on the other hand (Salajeghe & Sistani, 2010).

Ethical climate is a type of work-space reflecting the organization rules and dealing with ethical results (Samak, 2010). Establishment of ethical behaviors in an organization depends on the respect of the policy makers and managers to ethical values. Employees are the most valuable resources of any organization. Today, human resources are considered as the main assets of organizations and their competitive advantage. It can be said that employee productivity is not working hard, and it is working with better planning and more thoughts and increasing creativity (Kawara, 2014). The management mission and objectives of any organization are associated with effective application of the various resources such as labor force, capital, materials, energy and information. Optimal implication of human resources is of great importance in this mission (Okereke & Daniel, 2010) and human resources are some of the most important productivity factors in an organization. The most important factor to achieve optimal organization productivity is efficient resources. By increasing competition and development of human resources development methods, the organizations attempt to keep the talented employees and empower them to show their performance (Mehmood, 2012).

In addition to organizational and legal criteria, need a set of ethical and value guidance helping them in administrative behavior to create coordination and unity of procedure to move towards good collective and general method. Normally, the organization members accept the values relevant to their lives. Organizations are obliged to create an environment of ethics and values in organizations (Mehmood, 2012). Thus, it is expected that organizational ethics is based on the value system in the society in which ethics of people is evaluated. The present study aims to evaluate the relationship between organizational ethics and employee productivity.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the following theories:

1) Utilitarian theory

This theory was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Utilitarian theory states that ethics are normative system that is primarily concerned with the consequences of ethical decisions. Teleological reasoning takes into consideration that the ethical decision is dependent upon the consequences of the actions. In teleological reasoning, a person will do the right thing if the consequences of his or her actions are good. As a result of the consequentialist nature of utilitarianism, the means to get to the ethical decision (end) are secondary; the end result is that which must be considered before determining the morality of the decision. Sometimes utilitarian principles may be harmful to a group of people or to an individual. Utilitarian ethics is concerned about the consequences of actions, regardless of the action itself. Some goals of the ethical decision, such as human rights, may matter more than the consequences of the action. In this way, utilitarianism can provide an excuse for those who commit wrongs for noble reasons.

On the other hand, utilitarianism may argue that the actions are actually not utilitarian because the long-term effects may have an opposite effect: less happiness for the greater number of people. Utilitarian principles often run contrary to individual's rights, and at times are the antithesis to concepts of modern justice theories. Therefore, this theory is relevant in the study because it determines the right things to be done at all times by focusing on the outcomes. The theory believes that the purpose of morality is to make life better by increasing the number of good things. The assumptions of the study belief that utilities, which reflect benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness are psychological concepts. The theory utilitarian describes benefit and harms in terms of the satisfaction of personal preferences.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Organizational Ethics

Organizational ethics is an amalgamation of the principles that guide the actions of management concerning their stakeholders. These stakeholders include the shareholders, employees, creditors, host communities as well as the society at large. Wu (1999) see ethics as a norm that advocates that people be held responsible and accountable for the kind of work they do in the organization based on the belief that work has inherent value to the individual

in a business. Organizations who believe in ethics should have a code of ethics which they need to follow. Based on this, organizational code of ethics is simply a statement of corporate principles, ethics, and rules of conduct, code of practice or company philosophy regarding the responsibility to employees, organizational members, shareholders, consumers, and other stakeholders in the organization.

Furthermore, Wu (1999) describes ethics as part of focus and responsibilities of a business organization and therefore, employees are expected to be committed to the core values as well as principles of the organization. This implies that ethics can be broadly seen as the guideline or code of practices that an organization and its managers can follow to make sound judgments and decisions. This is adjudged so because ethics in the organization comprises of the set rules and standards which are pronounced in law and regulations, as well as internal policy processes and procedures. For instance, honesty and open-mindedness, working with respect, integrity and diligence, and as well as fairness are based on the principles of ethics, which organizational members are expected to imbibe in terms of service delivery to customers and other stakeholders.

Agwu (2013) provides that there are basic principles that guide ethics especially in the area of business. These principles are known as standards of morals and they comprise beneficence, least harm, and respect for autonomy as well as justice. The first one, which is beneficence, guides those that are determined to make the wisest decisions that will be generally agreed upon as ideal. This urgency to do great jobs from moral decipherable and discernment lead to a proper answer to a moral or ethical dilemma. It indicates that ethical theories or models should focus on the achievement of the greatest volume of good in order for people to benefit from it. Since it is assumed that people benefit from the best, it becomes conclusive that this imperative is closely tied with the principles of utilitarian ethical theory. The second one, which is the least harm focuses on moral situations in which making no decision at all seems to be the most advantageous by all accounts. Subsequently, organizational leaders try their best to ensure that the least damage possible is done and to cause damage to the least of individuals in the organization.

The third one, which is respect for autonomy provides that leaders need to permit individuals to experience freedom and autonomy while trying to make choices that will influence their lives. This implies practicing strong-willed power over one's life as much as can be expected reasonably since it is believed that an individual has the greatest understanding and if possible, control of his or her life. This standard is an expansion of the beneficence rule due to the fact that an individual who has autonomy would like to exercise authority over his back possible. Then justice provides that organizational leaders should always focus their efforts and exertions on the activities that are found reasonable for those involved in the organization.

3.2 Ethical Culture

Ethical culture is the cautious act of implementing and adopting policies that are generally acceptable as right by the majority of the stakeholders of the firm. Truxillo, Bauer and Erdogan (2016) succinctly put it that having an organizational culture that emphasizes ethical behavior can cut down on misbehavior of organizations, they concluded that whether an organization develops a culture that emphasizes doing the right thing. Leaders with a moral compass set the tone when it comes to ethical dilemmas. Treviño and Weaver (2013) define ethical culture as those behaviors that encourage ethical deeds in firms. Tozer (2012) outlines the consequences of operating in an unethical, irresponsible, unprincipled, unconscionable and nefarious manner to include the loss of customers' support, lack of trust by suppliers, negative reputable and damage of organization's image. Agwu (2013) added that the firm will not only lose customers, suppliers, and community trust but will also lose the support of its workers and managers. Therefore, ethical culture is concerned with managers and employees alike conforming to the organization's ethical code of conduct organization. That is, how the firm responds to the internal or external stimulus without breaching the code of conduct.

Ethical culture is dimensionalized using clarity, supportability, transparency and sanctionability (Kaptein, 2007). Clarity has to do with stating concrete, comprehensive and understandable expectations from the employees. Supportability lies in creating an ambient environment which adequately supports or helps employees achieve expectations within ethical boundaries. However, transparency talks about the extent to which the organization has made the workers understand the repercussions of their actions and inactions.

3.3 Employee Productivity

Employee productivity is one of the emerging concepts in management literature and it is one of the foremost challenges confronting organizations (Hanaysha, 2016). The increasing interest in this concept might be related to the fact that organizational success is significantly rely on the productivity level of its work force (Kawara, 2014). However, productivity itself is of immense concern for almost all organizations and managers, therefore, it must be taken seriously. Agwu (2013) view productivity as the capability to accomplish stated objectives within a definite time frame at a determined cost and an acceptable standard. In other words, since the goal of every organization is to achieve maximum output, therefore, productivity must be given special attention.

Employee productivity is the time spent by an employee executing his or her job duties, in order to achieve expected outcomes based on the job description.

3.4 Organizational Culture

Culture is a great influence on employees' motivation and behavioral pattern in an organization that involves rooted shared values, beliefs and assumption. The culture of an organization is the key that gives that organization its shared sense of meaning. This sense of meaning is developed over a period of time in the form of values, beliefs and actions that serve as a guide to employee's behavior. Culture focuses on the values, beliefs and meanings used by the members of a group and how its uniqueness originates, evolves and operates. Culture is the way of life of a group of people and is quite complex. Organizational culture should be characterized by consistency, consensus, and possession of single and unified culture. Culture is the beliefs, values, habits, behaviors, symbols, languages and norms etc. shared by people who live in a particular society or territory which cannot be felt but sensed. Most times the peoples' culture guides their behaviors, be it positive or negative because it affects their personal decisions on issues of life.

4. Empirical Literature

Lee (2020) investigated achieving corporate sustainability performance and the influence of corporate ethical value, and leader- member exchange on employee behaviors and organizational performance. A total of 310 data sets were collected and used to test hypotheses. To assess the factorability of the variables, exploratory factor analysis was conducted, and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the fit and validity of the measurement model. Then, the structural model proceeded to test the hypotheses. The results of this study found that employee behaviors can highly influence corporate sustainability performance. The study recommended that corporate sustainability performance becomes not just a marketing tactic but can also be considered as one of the essential strategies to improve organizational performance.

Kelidbari and Ebrahimi (2016) conducted a study on the role of ethical leadership on employee performance in Guilan. The aim of this research is to investigate the role of ethical leadership on employee's performance in Rasht University of Medical Sciences. The research method in this study is descriptive - correlation and based on the objective, it is an applied research. The statistical population of this research consisted of all employees of the University of Medical Sciences in the city of Rasht, which the number of sample size was determined 337 employees by the available non-probability sampling method. In order to collect data, standard questionnaire was used, and finally 349 questionnaires were analyzed. In the inferential statistics, the Kolmogorov- Smirnov test was used to investigate the normality of data distribution. With regard to the normality of data distribution, in order to investigate the hypotheses, the parametric tests of Pearson correlation and hierarchical regression in SPSS software were used. In order to test the fitness of research model and investigating all relationships, the structural equation modeling in LISREL software was used. The research results showed that the role of ethical leadership in the performance of employees is indirectly significant, and all hypotheses were confirmed. It is suggested that the leaders can apply the following methods to enhance the quality of their job and vocational relationships with their subordinates.

Sunanda (2018) investigated the impact of workplace ethics on employee and organization productivity. This paper examines the effects of etiquette and unethical behaviour on employee commitment and productivity in India. A descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study using 100 questionnaires, which were administered on employees in different sectors in India. Secondary data as well as documented evidence were used for the data collection. The sampling procedure was carried out randomly. The data collected were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling and supported by descriptive statistics. Each item was based on a 5-Point-Likert scale. The data was presented with the use of SPSS while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized. The results show that significant relationship exists between ethical standards and organizational productivity in India. The study recommended that efforts must be made to ensure and observe etiquette and ethical conduct within work centers for the expected goals of the complex organization to be attained.

Faregh, Jahanian and Salimi (2021) investigated Predicting employee productivity based on work ethics and organizational learning. The purpose of this study was to predict employee productivity based on work ethics and organizational learning. The method of the present study was descriptive-correlation. The statistical population included the employees of the Social Security Organization (404 people) whose sample size was selected based on Cochran's formula and random sampling method (n=205). The research instruments were Hersey and Blanchard (1983) employee productivity questionnaire, organizational learning questionnaire, the reliability of which was obtained by Cronbach's alpha test (0.84).

Descriptive statistics were analyzed with SPSS software and inferential statistics were analyzed. Data analysis showed that the variables of work ethic and organizational learning can predict 0.45 variance of the criterion variable (employee productivity). Also, work ethic and organizational learning had an impact factor of 0.51 and

0.43, respectively, on employee productivity (p <0.05). The study recommended that by strengthening the work ethic variable, more productivity can be witnessed in employees. Also, supplementing work ethic, strengthening organizational learning and paying attention to employee learning can lead to greater employee productivity.

5. Research Methodology

The design employed in this study is descriptive and correlational research design. This research focuses on organizational ethics and employee productivity in Microfinance banks in Cross River State. The population of the study includes eleven (11) microfinance banks and four hundred (400) employees in Cross River State. These are Akin microfinance in Calabar, Crutech microfinance in Calabar, CSD microfinance in Ikom, Ekondo microfinance in Calabar, FCE Obudu microfinance, First Royal microfinance in Calabar, Ishie microfinance in Calabar, Living spring in Calabar, Alache microfinance in Ogoja, Unical Microfinance in Calabar and Lapo Microfinance bank.

Data for this study were gathered from primary sources and through the use of structured questionnaires from respondents of the microfinance banks in Cross River State. The study employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis to measure the relationship between variables that were tested in the study. Based on the formulated hypotheses, the following model was stated thus to show the relationship between organizational ethics and employee productivity.

$Y = f(x)$

Where;

Y = Dependent variable

x = Independent variable

EMP = f (INT, DIS, BC, HON, OC)

Dependent variable = Employee productivity (Quality of work, timeliness, accuracy, service delivery used as proxy of productivity)

Independent variable = Integrity (INT), Discipline (DIS), Behavioral control (BC), Honesty (HON) in terms of organization

Moderating variable = Organizational culture (OC)

6. Analysis of the Results

Hypothesis one:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between organizational integrity and employee' quality of work.

Independent variable: Integrity

Dependent variable: Quality of work

Test statistic: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient

The analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.872 indicating the existence of strong positive relationship between integrity and employee quality of work. The test was significant at 0.01 significant level and led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between integrity and employee quality of work. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and conclusion reached there is a significant relationship between integrity and employee' quality of work.

Table 1. Correlation result of relationship between integrity and employee' quality of work

		INT	QUA
INT	Pearson correlation	1	.872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of squares and cross-products	138.58	171.21
	Covariance	.250	.236
	N	196	196
QUA	Pearson correlation	.872**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of squares and cross-products	176.41	622.44

Covariance		.336	1.51
N		196	196

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

Source: SPSS analysis.

Hypothesis two:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between organizational discipline and timeliness.

Independent variable: Discipline

Dependent variable: Timeliness

Test statistic: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient

The analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.845 indicating the existence of strong positive relationship between discipline and timeliness. The test was significant at 0.01 significant level and led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between discipline and timeliness. The alternative hypothesis was consequently accepted, and conclusion reached that there is a significant relationship between organizational discipline and timeliness.

Table 2. Correlation result of relationship between discipline and timeliness

		DIS	TM
DIS	Pearson correlation	1	.845**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of squares and cross-products	301.74	116.94
	Covariance	.421	.305
	N	196	196
TM	Pearson correlation	.845**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of squares and cross-products	176.94	159.32
	Covariance	.305	.201
	N	196	196

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

Source: SPSS analysis by Researcher, 2024.

Hypothesis three:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between organizational behavioral control and accuracy.

Independent variable: Behavioral control

Dependent variable: Accuracy

Test statistic: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient

The analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.809 indicating the existence of strong positive relationship between behavioral control and accuracy and significant at 0.01 significant level. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between behavioral control and accuracy. The conclusion was that organizational behavioral control significantly related with accuracy.

Table 3. Correlation result of relationship between behavioral control and accuracy

		BC	ACC
BC	Pearson correlation	1	.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

		HON	SD
	Sum of squares and cross-products	33.32	124.92
	Covariance	.517	.404
	N	196	196
	Pearson correlation	.809**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
ACC	Sum of squares and cross-products	127.92	318.28
	Covariance	.404	.649
	N	196	196

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

Source: SPSS analysis by Researcher, 2024.

Hypothesis four:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between organizational honesty and service delivery.

Independent variable: Honesty

Dependent variable: Service delivery.

Test statistic: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient

The analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.803 indicating the existence of strong positive relationship between honesty and service delivery. The test was significant at 0.01 significant level and led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between honesty and service delivery. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the conclusion reached there is a significant relationship between organizational honesty and service delivery.

Table 4. Correlation result of relationship between honesty and service delivery

		HON	SD
	Pearson correlation	1	.803**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
HON	Sum of squares and cross-products	138.58	171.21
	Covariance	.250	.236
	N	196	196
	Pearson correlation	.803**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
SD	Sum of squares and cross-products	176.41	622.44
	Covariance	.336	1.51
	N	196	196

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

Source: SPSS analysis.

Hypothesis five:

H_0: Organizational culture does not significantly moderate organizational ethics on employee productivity.

Moderating variable: Organizational culture

Dependent variables: Organizational ethics

Test statistic: Multiple regression analysis

The analysis showed the test was significant at 0.01 significant level and led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that organizational culture does not significantly moderate organizational ethics on employee productivity. From Table 5, the first Beta (B) represents intercept of the relationship and is the unstandardized coefficient showing the value of .635 and increase of .712 for every one-unit increase in

organizational culture. The second Beta (B) is the standardized coefficient for the influence of organizational culture on employee productivity. It indicates the effect of independent value in standard deviation form. It shows the number of standard deviations dependent variable decrease where there is increase in one unit. The value .165 shows the slope while .635 and .180 show an increase for every one unit of the dependent variable.

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis of moderating influence of organizational culture, ethics and productivity

Variable	R	R^2	Adj R^2	B	Standard error	B	T	Sig
Constant				.165	.068		2.342	.008
OE	.753	.431	.421	.635	.614	.712	21.883	.000
Productivity	.265	.087	.085	.180	.765	.286	7.397	.000

Note: Independent variable = Organizational culture.

Source: SPSS output.

7. Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of the results, the findings were summarized thus;

1) There is a significant relationship between organizational integrity and employees' quality of work.

2) There is a significant relationship between organizational discipline and timeliness.

3) There is a significant relationship between organizational behavioral control and accuracy.

4) There is a significant relationship between organizational honesty and service delivery.

8. Conclusion

The study examined organizational ethics and employee productivity in microfinance banks in Cross River State. The study revealed that organizational integrity, organizational discipline, organizational behavioral control and honesty have a positive relationship with employee productivity. Every organization should strive to be committed in a manner that is ethically transparent. Ethics is concerned with contemporary norms or standards of conduct that govern the relationship among human beings and their institution. Ethical behavior can bring significant benefits to a business such as attract investors and keep the company's share price high, thereby protecting the business, attract more employees willing to work for the company, in the process reducing recruitment costs and this enables the company to favor the most talented employees.

9. Recommendations

In line with the findings, the following recommendations are made;

1) Ethical practices in the workplace play a significant role in establishing a strong relationship with quality of work life and portraying ethical corporate image. Therefore, management should create a healthy work environment where employees can be motivated towards productivity.

2) Efforts should be made to ensure and observe etiquette and ethical conduct within work centers for the expected goals of the complex organization to be attained.

3) Work ethics of an individual should not be a mere toehold in carrying out his activities but is expected to be in considering the level of welfare of employees so as to increase satisfaction, which in turn have an impact on employee productivity.

4) Management of microfinance should strive to see the implementation of organizational ethics that can help them to achieve superior performance in terms of organizational discipline, commitment and work attitude.

5) Management should take the necessary actions to improve organizational performance by building the foundation for implementing environmental ethics.

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