

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This work examined knowledge sharing support and employee commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State. The objective of the study was to examine the extent to knowledge sharing and affects measures of employee commitment such as affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. The study was anchored Social Exchange Theory propounded by George Casper Homans. The study adopted the explanatory cross-sectional survey research design. A sample size 248 was drawn from a population of 700 staff of 19 road construction firms in Rivers State. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach alpha. After validation by the supervisor, 248 copies of structured questionnaire were administered while 240 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis, Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used for the bivariate analysis while Partial Correlation was used for the multivariate analysis. The finding was made there is a significant positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employee commitment. The study concluded that knowledge sharing is a major motivational tool that enhances employee commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study recommended more deliberate effort on the part of managers and senior staff to strengthen mentoring relationships so as to promote employee commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Employee Support, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment

INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a dwindling level of commitment among workers in road construction firms in Port Harcourt. The incessant cases of employee absenteeism, lateness to duty, carefree attitude to work among some workers in road construction firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State suggests low commitment level among employees (Michael, 2018). Low levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment are evident, characterized by a high intention to quit, increased lateness to work, and unethical behaviour among construction workers. Employees who do not receive adequate career support are likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, resulting in high turnover rates. The lack of psychological support can lead to increased stress and absenteeism, as employees struggle to manage work pressures. Additionally, without proper knowledge sharing, employees may resort to unethical behaviour due to a lack of understanding of industry standards and organizational expectations. This erosion of commitment undermines organizational stability and performance, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive mentoring

programs to enhance employee commitment and retention (Meyer & Allen, 1997; McMahon, 2021; Sharma & Dhar, 2022).

In some of the road construction firms in Rivers State, there also appears to be a critical concern about the neglect of mentoring. Mentoring is essential for fostering employee development and commitment; however, many firms fail to implement structured mentoring programs. The absence of career support prevents employees from receiving guidance on career advancement and professional development, leading to a lack of direction and motivation. Without psychological support, employees may feel isolated and overwhelmed by job stress, contributing to low morale and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the failure to share knowledge effectively hampers the development of technical skills and industry expertise among employees, which can reduce their job performance and engagement. As a result, employees may not feel valued or supported, leading to a lack of emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization (Santos & Kram, 2022; Ragins & Verbos, 2021; Swap et al., 2023).

Another issue that necessitated this study is the dearth of documented empirical studies on how mentoring strategies such as career support, psychological support, and knowledge sharing influence employee commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt (This can be seen in the last paragraph in the background of this study). There is therefore, need to close this knowledge gap.

Research Hypotheses

Base on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee affective commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee normative commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee continuance commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State.

Knowledge Sharing

Before examine knowledge sharing as a dimension of mentoring, it is pertinent to say that the term "knowledge" should be critically examined. Knowledge is regarded as the most critical resource of the economy's and a company's primary source of production and value. Nachimuthu (2006) pointed that knowledge is very important in the modern uncertain economy and it is the sure source of lasting competitive advantage when it is used by an organization collectively, efficiently, and ensuring that it is readily acquired when needed. Knowledge has been accepted as a key strategic resource that allows firms to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in today's dynamic competitive environment. Knowledge is information in action and a dynamic process in which data and information are continuously collected and analyzed to create more value for business decision making (Lee & Yang, 2000; Anantatmula, 2007). In the view of Lin (2007), knowledge in organizational setting is described as an indication of a firm's intellectual capital: this includes work-related experience, expertise, know-how, and best practices that can be acquired and shared. Calo (2008) noted that knowledge is what employees

such as secretaries need to enhance their job performance. Thus, he pointed out two kind of knowledge such as explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

Explicit and explicit knowledge: Explicit knowledge is defined as highly, observable and can be easily transferred within the organization or between individuals. Explicit knowledge is more precisely and formally articulated, although removed from the original context of creation or use (e.g. an abstract mathematical formula derived from physical experiments or a training manual describing how to close a sale). Tacit knowledge refers to as knowledge gained through experience and it is difficult to express and formalize (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). Tacit knowledge as being highly invincible and confining in the mind of a person, and as a result it is very difficult to articulate or externalize and hence cannot be easily diffused. This knowledge is based on personal insights, intuition, and personal skills and is shared, more dominantly, through direct person-to-person contacts (Edvardsson, 2008). In road construction firms in Rivers State, employees endeavour capturing and sharing knowledge (information) to enhance their job performance. Thus, the practice of strategically capturing, storing, utilizing and sharing relevant functional information in an organization has been explained as knowledge management (Buckley & Carter 2002). Spek and Spijkervet (2005), asserts that knowledge management is the complete control of handling of awareness within an organization for the purpose of carrying out the company's objectives. It deals the strategies and processes of identifying, capturing and leveraging knowledge. To Bukowitz and Williams (1999), knowledge management is the procedure used by the organization to create capital from its intellectual or knowledge-based assets. Knowledge rich service industry is growing faster than ever and the knowledge worker accounts for majority of the new jobs. Capitalizing on goal achievement of organizations, the knowledge gained by employees has to be shared among them to bridge the gap of uncertainty that might likely arise. This gives credence to the concept of knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing as the third and last dimension of mentoring as used within the context of this study, has been giving meaning by several scholars, some are: Knowledge sharing is an area of knowledge management concerned with the movement of knowledge across the boundaries created by specialized knowledge domains (Carlile & Rebertisch, 2003). Therefore, it is a subset of knowledge management encompassing the exchange of knowledge (information, skills, experiences, or expertise) within and across organizations. Although it can be one-directional, knowledge sharing in most cases is a two-way or multilateral exchange in which the parties learn from each other. Knowledge sharing is more than mere communication, because much knowledge in organizations is hard to articulate. In development work, some knowledge sharing has a regional aspect. Knowledge sharing is the provision or receiving of information regarding a task or know-how and feedback about a particular product or a procedure (Foss, et al 2010). Base on the above assertion, knowledge sharing is of fundamental importance for organizations as it transforms individual knowledge into organizational knowledge. In the view of Gurteen (1999), Knowledge sharing is giving of information from one individual to another, either through a database or a face to face interaction. These days in organizations, even in road construction firms in Rivers State, it is important to share knowledge between employees so as to allow it flow on all levels of the organization.

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is the bond an employee has with an organization based on a sense of reciprocity by which the employee feels obligated to remain with the organization in appreciation of what the organization has offered the employee. Employees who are normatively committed remain with the organization as a responsive appreciation for benefits enjoyed by them in the organization. This type of commitment typifies a feeling of indebtedness towards an organization considering what the organization has given to the employee. It can also be described as a reciprocal commitment (Ogadimma, 2010). Management of transportation firms in Rivers state cannot operate competitively without committed workforce.

Normative commitment is the attachment an employee feels for an organization remain with the organization as a responsive appreciation to benefits enjoyed by the employee in the organization. This type of commitment typifies a feeling of indebtedness towards an organization considering what the organization has given to the employee. It can also be described as a reciprocal commitment. The researcher tenaciously agrees with the view of Chun-Chen and Ching-Sing (2011) that normative commitment may be rooted in feelings of indebtedness toward an organization for its supply of certain benefits, for example, tuition reimbursement or in-house training. The feelings of obligation may continue until the employees feel that they have "paid back" the debt (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

The normatively committed employee feels thankful for the benefits offered by the organization such that he feels duty bound to continue working for the organization. Jaja and Okpu (2013) reports that normative commitment has to do with feelings of obligations employees have to continue with the organization. McDonald and Makin (2000) posit that society's norms and a feeling that employees ought to remain with the organization influence this commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) posit that employees whose parents have been long-term employees of an organization would have a strong normative commitment. This may result if the parents had stressed the importance of being loyal to their organization. Jha (2011) believes normative commitment is influenced by cultures that stress the importance of loyalty and devotion to institutions such as family, marriage, country, religion and employment organizations. Normative commitment manifests in the form of the employee feeling an obligation to stay, reciprocates and abides by the rules and regulations of the workplace. Employee is normatively committed to an organization if they are reciprocal in action. As opposed to feeling an obligation to stay, normatively committed employees also pay back to the organization by contributing sacrificially as well as showing organizational citizenship behaviour as a way of responding to the goodness of the organization. The reciprocal action here can be expressed through extra time, volunteering, and going extra miles to contributing to the attainment of organizational objectives.

Normative commitment can be conceptualized as the degree to which an employee feel obligated to remain and obey rules and regulations of the organizational.

- i. **Obligation to Stay:**** As said earlier, employees feeling obligated to stay, said to be normatively committed. Normatively committed employees pay back to

the organization by contributing sacrificially as well as showing organizational citizenship behavior as a way of responding to the goodness of the organization. Obligation to stay here captures the psychological contract or responsibility which an employee feels he has for an organization. Judging from the number areas or achievement they have recorded as a result of their association with the organization, the employee feels he is indebted to the organization. He feels it is not nice for him to quit having enjoyed certain privileges like trainings, career advancement, etc.

- ii. **Obedience to Rules and Regulation:** A normatively committed employee will also align himself with the norms of his organization. He upholds the values of the organizations and exhibits ethical behaviour and general obedience to rules and regulations. His respect for constituted authority and code of conduct emanates from the assumption that the organization deserves his best having given him its best. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they "ought" to (as "good thing to do" norm) remain with the organization (Zeb-Obipi & Agada, 2018). To this end, normatively committed employees must be obedient to organizational rules and regulation working greatly in attainment of the organizational goals.

Knowledge Sharing and Employee Commitment

Organizations such as road construction firms in Rivers State, make decisions in relation to goal attainment is strongly anchored on how committed their employees are. Therefore, uncommitted employees may cause great organizational underperformance which will lead to low productivity, low profitability and as well as reductions of market share. Since all employees in road construction firms in Rivers State does not have the same knowledge regarding to work patterns it is significant to note that organizations (road construction firms in Rivers State) ensures that employees share their working knowledge among themselves so as to enable the organization keep moving even when most of them are no more in the organization as a result of retirement, death, resignations etc. This is in line with the view of Gurteen (1999), that relevance reasons why employees should share knowledge within an organization points to the fact that:

- i. Increasing turn-over of staff, when someone leaves an organization their unshared knowledge walks out of the door with them.
- ii. Intangible products are taking a growing share of global trade from the application of new knowledge.
- iii. Increasingly the only sustainable competitive advantage is continuous innovation.

Base on the above postulation, within the context of road construction firms in Rivers State, there should be an open system of working where every employee relates effectively to the other sharing experiences and ideas in relation to their workplace.

More often among employees in the workplace, there is usually an interactive session that enable workers share work tips and air their views on work related matters, learning from each other and make corrections where and when necessary most times in achieving the organizational goals. These interactive sections will reveal to the less experienced employees on issues that happened in the organization when they were not yet employed, this becomes easy for the employee if he or she keeps to the norms of the organization.

This will take a committed employee to relate such discussions of previous happenings in the organization to the current situation to enable him handle and solve similar problems when they arise. Due to these concerted efforts shown by these employees, and his or her investment made in the organization, such employee will decide to remain in the organization even in deteriorated times hence showing unending commitment (Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2023). Therefore, it is not wrong to say that knowledge sharing as a dimension of mentoring is very important in organizations especially in road construction firms in Rivers State. This is because all organization seeks competent employees who are committed to their respective jobs hence improving their job performance and achieving the organizational goals and set objectives.

Theoretical Review

This work is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory. The Social Exchange Theory was propounded by George Casper Homans in the year 1958 (Olannye, 2014). Social exchange theory postulates that "give and take" forms the basis of almost all relationships though their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationships. The main assumptions of the theory are as follows:

- i. In a relationship, every individual has expectations from his/her partners. The extent to which such expectations are satisfied determines the strength and survival of the relationship;
- ii. Good relationships are mutually beneficial and not supposed to be one sided. An individual invests his time and energy in relationship only when he gets something out of corresponding or higher value from it (Olannye, 2014).

Young or less experienced employees have the social expectation of being guided and encouraged by superior and more experienced managers (Neil, 2018). The justification of the Social Exchange Theory as the theoretical anchor of this study lines the fact that the theory predicts that the more experienced managers and superior officers share their wisdom, experience, and provide career support to less experienced subordinates, the happier and more committed mentees become. On the other hand, dearth of meaning mentoring relationship is capable of making workers feel alienated and deprived thereby leading to dwindling commitment level (Ayşe, *et al.*, 2013; Mba & Godday, 2023; Akpan, *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the Social Exchange Theory predicts employee commitment as a reciprocal response to satisfying mentoring efforts in road construction firms.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is particularly relevant in predicting the relationship between mentoring and employee commitment in road construction firms in Rivers State, as it highlights the mutual benefits that arise from supportive work relationships. According to Antonakis and Ashkanasy (2009), mentoring facilitates a reciprocal exchange where employees receive personal and professional support, fostering a sense of obligation to the organization. This sense of obligation, as noted by Petrides et al. (2007), often translates into greater commitment, as employees who feel invested in through mentoring are more likely to remain loyal and dedicated to the company. Furthermore, O'Boyle et al. (2010) argue that the supportive nature of mentoring creates a positive cycle of exchange, where employees, feeling valued and understood, increase their engagement and productivity, which ultimately strengthens their commitment to the firm's goals. Thus, SET underscores how mentoring not only enhances individual development but also reinforces a deeper emotional and professional connection to the organization,

which is crucial for long-term retention and success in the demanding road construction sector.

Results

Knowledge Sharing and Employee Commitment

Ho₇: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee affective commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee normative commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee continuance commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Correlations between Knowledge Sharing and Employee Commitment

| | | Knowledge Sharing | Affective Commitment | Normative Commitment | Continuance Commitment |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | Knowledge Sharing | 1.000 | 0.833** | 0.641** | 0.609** |
| | Correlation Coefficient | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 |
| | Affective Commitment | 0.833** | 1.000 | 0.833** | 0.833** |
| | Correlation Coefficient | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 |
| | Normative Commitment | 0.641** | 0.641** | 1.000 | 0.641** |
| | Correlation Coefficient | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | . | .000 |
| | N | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 |
| Continuance Commitment | 0.609** | 0.609** | 0.609** | 1.000 | |
| Correlation Coefficient | | | | | |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | . | |
| N | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | |

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

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Column two of table 1 above shows r value of 0.833 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating knowledge sharing and employee commitment. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that there is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee affective commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt was rejected. This implies that there is a significant and very strong positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employee affective commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Column three of table 1 above shows r value of 0.641 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating knowledge sharing and normative commitment. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) which states that there is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee normative commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt was rejected. This implies that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employee normative commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Column four of table 1 above shows r value of 0.609 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating knowledge sharing and continuance commitment. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that there is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing and employee continuance commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a3}) is accepted. This implies that there is a significant strong relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' continuance commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt. These results showed that there is a significant strong relationship between knowledge sharing and employee commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

Knowledge Sharing and Employee Commitment

The test of hypotheses one to three revealed that there is a significant strong relationship between knowledge sharing and employee commitment in terms of affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This implies that mentors (management) in road construction firms who encourages or impose knowledge sharing culture on their mentees (employees) stand a better chance having a high level of performance by their employees, through their commitment. This finding showed that mentoring in terms of knowledge sharing bring about corresponding improvement in the commitment of employees in road construction firms in Port Harcourt in terms of affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. These findings are in consonance with the findings of Gurteen (1999), that relevance reasons why employees should share knowledge within an organization points to the fact that Increasing turn-over of staff, when someone leaves an organization their unshared knowledge walks out of the door with them, intangible products are taking a growing share of global trade from the application of new knowledge and increasingly the only sustainable competitive advantage is continuous innovation.

Base on the above postulation, since all employees of the organization especially road construction firms in Port Harcourt are not employed at the same time, it is pertinent to say that discussion of previous happening in the organization (firms) is very necessary. This because most of the past events that happened in the organization may be relevant in handling the current situation of the organization. Experienced employees (mentors) of the organization are charged to disclose or share these ideas, experiences, occurrence and knowledge that happened to the less experience employee (mentees) are not yet employed.

More often among employees in the workplace, there is usually an interactive session that enable workers share work tips and air their views on work related matters, learning from

each other and make corrections where and when necessary most times in achieving the organizational goals. These interactive sections are revealed to the less experienced employees on issues that happened in the organization when they were not yet employed, this becomes easy for the employee if he or she keeps to the norms of the organization. This will take a committed employee to relate such discussions of previous happenings in the organization to the current situation to enable him handle and solve similar problems when they arise. Due to these concerted efforts shown by these employees, and his or her investment made in the organization, such employee will decide to remain in the organization even in deteriorated times hence showing unending commitment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses of data and discussion of findings, the study concluded that Knowledge sharing optimizes employee commitment in terms of affective, normative and continuance commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. It was also concluded that individual emotional intelligence significantly moderates the relationship between mentoring and employee commitment in road construction firms in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Managers should involve employees in key decision-making processes, particularly those that affect their work. This can increase **affective commitment**, as employees feel respected and part of the firm's future direction.
2. Managers should acknowledge and reward employees for their long-term commitment to the organization through service awards, bonuses, or additional benefits. This can enhance **continuance commitment**, as employees become more aware of the tangible benefits of staying with the firm.
3. Managers should offer flexible work schedules or other work-life balance initiatives to support employees' psychological well-being. When employees feel that their personal needs are met, they are likely to develop stronger **continuance commitment**, as leaving the firm would mean losing these valued benefits.

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