

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATION: CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the conceptual relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour with psychological distress as a mediator in an organisation. The study necessitated by the use of inappropriate leadership styles in an organisation, which led to counterproductive work behaviour and psychological distress among employees that eventually led to the organisation poor performance. The methodology adopted in this study was a content analysis of existing literature on the mediating effect of psychological distress on the relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour. In line with the existing literature, leadership styles as independent variable is proxied by transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles. At the same time, counterproductive work behaviour used as a dependent. Psychological distress as a mediator. The findings of the study, revealed that there was conceptual relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour. Also, there was conceptual relationship among leadership style, psychological distress and counterproductive work behaviour. It is concluded that leadership styles positively affect counterproductive work behaviour and psychological distress. Also, useful and suitable Leadership styles play a vital role in reducing counterproductive work behaviour and psychological distress. In line with the preceding, the paper recommends that an organisation should adopt consistent and suitable leadership styles to reduce the problem of counterproductive behaviour and psychological distress in an organisation.

Key Words: Leadership Styles, Psychological, Distress, Counterproductive Work Behaviour, Organisation

Introduction

Globally, counterproductive work behaviour has become an issue of significant concern to researchers due to its substantial cost and disruptive nature (Anjum & Parvez, 2013). In America, losses amounting to 200 billion USD is usually as a result of counterproductive work behaviour exhibited by its employees. That is, as many as 33-75% of American employees engaged in such activities as theft, embezzlement, sabotage and unjustified absence. (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). Counter-productive work behaviour is evident in an organisation no matter the longitude or latitude. This as a result of the unpredictable nature and actions of employees and their responses to various situations. However, it is evident that a sector of the economy in which such types of action are exhibited most often is the public sector as compared to the private sector workers, (Burned & Pope, 2007). Counter-productive work behaviour (CWB) includes or embraces a whole range of workers malicious behaviour that affect the survival of an organisation. It is an umbrella of any malicious behaviour targeted against the workplace such as, unsocial behaviour. It can harm the performance and well-being of the person exhibiting it, the individual working with the person engaging in it, and the organisation in which it is taking place. Omar (2011), opined that most organisations are spending much money on workplace deviance in Nigeria.

Counter-productive work behaviour constitute a severe threat to service delivery in an organisations (Alias & Rash 2007; Olabimtian & Alausa, 2014); it has a Prevalence rate of 35 to 75% among workers in Nigeria. (Fagbohungebe, Akinbolade & Ayodeji 2012). Specifically, intentional disobedience, coming late to work and using or taking organisation property without authorisation have

been reported to have 65%, 40% and 80% respectively (Akikibofo, 2013). Similarly, theft, fraud, sabotage, acting rudely and arguing have been considered as the fastest growing deviant workplace behaviour among Nigerian workgroups in recent times.

Counter-productive work behaviour is a deliberate act exhibited by employees that can negatively affect the organisation, other employees or both (Penny & Spector 2005). Examples include gossiping about co-workers, wasting supplies or leaving work early. It also involves any act by the employee that violate the organisational norms and policies that have the potential to physically or mentally harm the organisation. Robinson & Bennet (1995) identified two main dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour. That is, interpersonally directed deviance (CWB-I), or deviance behaviour directed at other employees. Interpersonally directed deviance can include minor behaviour such as gossiping about others, or severe behaviour such as sexual harassment. The second dimension of counterproductive work behaviour is organisational directed deviance (CWB-O). This type of deviance can include minor behaviour such as arriving late, or serious behaviour, such as ruining equipment. Spector & Fox (2002) identified some specific types of counter-productive work behaviours which is beyond these two dimensions. Namely: abuse against others, production deviance, sabotage, withdrawal and theft. Abuse against others refers to physical or emotional abuse directed at other people, such as creating rumours, being rude, arguing or pushing someone. Production deviance means intentionally doing work incorrectly or inefficiently, such as working slowly or neglecting procedures (Penny & Spector, 2008). Sabotage is the purposely destroying of organisational property such as harming equipment or wasting supplies. Withdrawal is when workers work less than what is required by the organisation (Penny & Spector, 2008). Such as taking excessive breaks, sickness leave or not arriving to work on time. Theft is stealing from the organisation, co-workers or both.

Psychological distress is a concept which describes unpleasant feelings or emotions that disturb employee level of performance. That is, it is psychological discomfort that affect the employees' day to day routine. This as a result of negative views of the environment, others and the self. Sadness, anxiety, distraction and symptom of mental illness are the manifestation of psychological distress. Therefore, no two people experience an event is precisely the same way. Psychological distress is a subjective experience. That is, the severity of it depends upon the situation and how we perceive it.

Psychological distress is a relationship that exists between the person and the environment that is caused by taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being' (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Cooper & Marshall (1976) viewed psychological distress as a harmful ecological factors or stressors associated with a particular job. Blau (1981) opined that when an environmental need exceeds a person's ability to response, or the person's ability exceeds the environmental demand, these situations represent stress. It is clear from this conceptualization that work pressure requires an employee to feel a misfit between the capabilities, resources, or demands and the expectations from the work environment.

Leadership style in an organisation is one of the essential factors that play a significant role in motivating and influencing the interest and commitment of the employees as well as reduce malicious behaviour in the organisation. It is a style utilised by a leader to provide direction and motivate an employee to implement plans to achieve organisational objectives (Strom, Sears & Kelly 2014). Messick and Kramer, (2004) argued that the degree to which the individuals exhibits leadership attitude depends on features, personal abilities, phenomenon and environment in which he finds himself. Glantz (2002), emphasizes the need for a manager to see his leadership style. The extent to which members of the organisation contribute in harnessing the resources of organisation depends equally on how well the leaders of the organisation understand and adopt appropriate leadership style in performing their roles as managers and leaders. Therefore, effectiveness in resource mobilisation, allocation, utilisation and enhancement of organisational performance depends to a large extent on leadership style among other factors. The good leadership style in any organisation is that which influence employees' potentials and working abilities to achieve organisational goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. (Mohammad, Rafi & Saad, 2012). A leader can adopt any of the available leadership styles, by looking at

the situation and environment he finds himself. Some of these leadership styles include: transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles. The difference between transformational and transactional leadership depends on the way of motivating others.

Transformational leader's behaviour is from the personal values and beliefs of the leader and motivates associates to do more than expected. Transformational leader demonstrates a close relationship with his subordinates that lead to the achievement of the sustainable performance of the organisation as a whole. Boonzaier (2008) said that transformational leaders develop strong emotional bonds with their followers through the use of individual attention, vision, and inspiration, and direct their followers toward the future and create organisational cultures of creative change and growth. This type of leadership is considered to be more proactive and more involved in the work of the employees (Jansen, 2013). On the other hand, transactional leadership commonly described as an exchange commitment where the employee receives a reward in exchange for accomplishing specific objectives (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 2006). Employees usually tend to be more motivated when transactional leadership is adopted (Jansen, 2013). Transactional leaders encourage followers through setting goals and providing rewards on the achievement of these goals (Boonzaier, 2008; Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1995).

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the main goals of the leaders is to serve. This is different from traditional leadership where the leaders main focus is the thriving of their organisation. A servant leader shares powers, puts the need of their employees first and help people develop and perform as highly as possible. Servant leadership imbibe the norm, which put the employees as main priorities. Instead of the employee working to serve the leader, the leader exists to serve the people. Servant leadership defined as leadership style that is primarily focused on the growth and well-being of individual. A servant leader has the moral character, the wisdom to foresee what is needed, and ability to meet the people needs (Nuijten, 2009).

However, counter-productive work behaviour in an organisation has been attributed to numerous factors. One of such factors is poor leadership styles. Right leadership styles have not been adopted in most organisation, and this resulted in counterproductive work behaviour among employees which eventually leads to poor performance. It is evident that the employees exhibit some behaviours that are not productive which affect the organisation seriously and have negative consequences on other employees and stakeholders. Among such actions are coming to work late or not coming at all without the consent of the superior, gossiping about co-workers, stealing, a physical fight just to mention but a few. This counter-productive work behaviour of employees that leads to poor performance is further heightened by the belief of the employees of their working environment. Also, thought of inequity and bad leadership further intensify their deviant behaviours of employees. Counterproductive work behaviour has always been a problem in organisation, with research indicating that the situation is costly in term of money to an organisation and also psychologically to their employees (Edward 2017).

Several studies that have been conducted on the relationship between leadership styles and counter-productive has produced consistent findings that need further introduction of another variable that is mediator to know why the consistency. Among the studies that reported a positive relationship between the constructs include: Kekeso & Agyemang (2014); Husaain, Akbar, Inatatullah, Afzai & Gillaini (2017); Howladar, Rahman & Uddin {2018}; Tsuno & Kawakami (2015); Salim & Gopinath (2015).

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the mediating effect of psychological distress on the relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour. While the specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. Examine the conceptual relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour.
- b. Examine the conceptual relationship among psychological distress, leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour.

Literature Review

Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Counter-productive work behaviour (CWB) is a behaviour intended to harm the organisation or other members of the organisation (Spector & Fox, 2002). CWB represents a phenomenon that is studied under a combination of terms, most notably deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). CWB involves a combination of behaviours, both minor, such as taking overly long breaks, or using organisation time for private purposes, and significant, such as stealing, or attacking others. Counter-productive Work Behaviour (CWB) is the actions of employees within the organization that destroy the workplace setting (Spector & Fox, 2002). Scholars define CWB from different and various perspective (Hogan & Hogan, 1989), organizational retaliatory (Gallagher, 2008), stimulated aggression (O' Leary-Kelly, 1996), rebellious behaviour (Lee, 2005) and workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). The malicious individual sentiments will pessimistically affect the organization performance (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). Such behaviours of employees are intolerant (Douglas & Martinko, 2001) and stressors for particular job (Penney & Spector, 2005).

Spector, Fox, Penny, Bruursema, Goh, & Kessler (2006) classified counterproductive work behaviour into five main dimensions. Abusive, production deviance, sabotage, theft and withdrawal. Abusive CWB is consist of harmful behaviour directed toward co-workers and others that harm either physically or psychologically through making threats, nasty comments, ignoring the person or undermining the person's ability to work effectively. Production deviance is a situation when an individual purposefully or intentionally failed to carry out job tasks effectively as they are supposed to be performed. Sabotage is the damaging physical property belonging to the organisation; intentional wasting of the materials and purposely littering the place of work. Theft is to steal something belonging to your organisation, delaying the duties to get an extra-time salary. Withdrawal is also consisting of a behaviour that restricts the amount of time working to be less than required by the organisation. It includes absence or arriving late.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style in an organisation is one of the critical factors that play a significant role in motivating and influencing the interest and commitment of the employees in the organisation. It is a style utilized by a leader to provide direction and encourage an employee to implement plans to achieve organisational objectives (Strom, Sears & Kelly 2014). Messick & Kramer (2004) argue that the degree to which the individuals exhibits leadership attitude depends on features, personal abilities, phenomenon and environment in which he finds himself. Glantz, (2002) emphasizes the need for a manager to see his leadership style. The extent to which members of an organisation contribute in harnessing the resources of organisation depends equally on how well the leaders of the organisation understand and adopt appropriate leadership style in performing their roles as managers and leaders. Therefore, effectiveness in resource mobilisation, allocation, utilisation and enhancement of organisational performance depends to a large extent on leadership style among other factors. The good leadership style in any organisation is that which influence employees' potentials and working abilities to achieve organisational goals and objectives efficiently and effectively (Mohammad, Rafi & Saad, 2012). A leader can adopt any of the available leadership styles, by looking at the situation and environment he finds himself. Some of these leadership styles include: transformational and transactional leadership styles. The difference between transformational and transactional leadership depend in the way of motivating others.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as a process in which leaders and followers help each other move to a higher level of morale and motivation (Burns 1978). Boonzaier (2008) opined that transformational leaders develop strong emotional bonds with their followers through the use of individual attention, vision, and inspiration, and direct their followers toward the future and create

organizational cultures of creative change and growth. This type of leadership is considered to be more proactive and more involved in the work of the employees (Jansen, 2013).

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Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the main goals of the leader is to serve. This is different from traditional leadership where the leaders main focus is the thriving of their organisation. A servant leader shares powers, puts the need of their employees first and help people develop and perform as highly as possible. Servant leadership inverts the norm, which put the employees as main priorities. Instead of the employee working to serve the leader, the leader exists to serve the people. Servant leadership is defined as leadership style that is primarily focused on the growth and well-being of individual. A servant leader has the moral character, the wisdom to foresee what is needed, and ability to meet the people needs (Nuijten, 2009).

Psychological Distress

Decker, Burnette & Mui (1997), conceptualized psychological distress as lack of enthusiasm, problems with sleep (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep), feeling downhearted or blue, feeling hopeless about the future, feeling emotionally bored or losing interest in things and thoughts of suicide. Mirowsky & Ross (1989) add that psychological distress is the unpleasant subjective state of depression and anxiety (being tense, restless, worried irritable and afraid), which has both emotional and psychological manifestations. They further added that there is a wide range of psychological distress, ranging from mild to extreme, with extreme levels being considered as mental illness such as affective disorder.

According to Chalfantetal (1990) psychological distress is defined as a continuous experience of unhappiness, nervousness, irritability and problematic interpersonal relationship. Depression is a costly health problem in the labour force. In addition to the health resources required to treat it, depression impacts workers behavioural, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and physical functioning, leading to excess disability and sickness absence and impaired work ability. Therefore, a large proportion of the cost of depression can be attributed to a loss of workdays due to scarcity and the reduced productivity of an individual who continue working when ill. Psychological distress is the exposure to a stressful event that threatens the physical or mental health, the inability to cope effectively with this stressor and the emotional turmoil that results from his ineffective coping (Horwitz & Ridner 2004).

Empirical Review

Howladar, Rahman & Uddin (2018) conducted a study on Deviant Workplace Behaviour and Job Performance: The Moderating Effect of Transformational Leadership. The aim of the study was to examine the Moderating Effect of Transformational Leadership on the Relationship Between Deviant Workplace Behaviour and Job Performance. The study revealed that there is a moderating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between deviant work behaviour and job performance. Novrianti & Santoso (2014) conducted a survey on the Role of Transformational Leadership as a Moderating Variable for the Relationship of Justice and Counterproductive Work Behaviour. The result showed that procedural justice and interactional justice significantly influence counterproductive work behaviour. Also, transformational leadership is not significantly moderating in influences of both justices toward counterproductive work behaviour.

Kessler, Bruusema, Rodopman & Spector (2013) carried out a survey on leadership, interpersonal conflict and counterproductive work behaviour. The aim of the study was to establish a link between interpersonal conflicts among employees and counterproductive work behaviour. The results showed that leadership behaviours and interpersonal conflict lead to negative emotions, which in turn lead to the amount of counterproductive work behaviour committed. Tsuno & Kawakami (2015) made a study in Japan on multifactor leadership styles and new exposure to workplace bullying. The aim was to investigate the prospective association between supervisor leadership styles and workplace bullying. Results showed that high score for passive leadership was significantly and positively associated with new exposure to workplace bullying. Transformational and transactional leadership styles were also significantly and positively associated with exposure to workplace bullying. Saidon, Galbreath & Whiteley (2013) did a study in Malaysia on moderating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between moral disengagement and workplace deviance. The aim of the study was to analyse the relationship between moral disengagement and workplace deviance by integrating the moderating role of transformational leadership. The results indicated that transformational leadership found to moderate the relationship between moral disengagement and interpersonal deviance.

Salim, & Gopinath (2015) conducted a survey on injustice, counterproductive work behaviour, mediating role of work stress. The aim was to examine the impact of Injustice on work stress and counterproductive work behaviour with mediating role of work stress. The results revealed that all the three dimensions of injustice have direct impact on production deviance and withdrawal. Weldali, & Lubis, (2016) had a study in UAE on personality traits and counterproductive work behaviour: moderating effect of perceived organizational support. The aim of the study was to examine factors leading to counterproductive work behaviour. The statistical findings showed that emotional stability and personality trait was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with counterproductive work behaviour. Kekesi & Agyemang (2014) conducted a survey on perceived job insecurity and psychological distress with moderating role of work values. The aim was to examine the moderating effect of work value on the relationship between perceived job insecurity and psychological distress among 202 junior employees of selected public and private organization in Ghana. Result indicated that there is a positive relationship between perceived job insecurity and psychological distress whereas, work value moderates the relationship.

Matta, Kooekmaz, Johnson & Bicaksiz (2014) carried out a study in Turkey on significant work events and counterproductive work behaviour: The role of fairness, emotions and emotions regulation were examined. The aim was to examine multi-level predictors of daily counterproductive work behaviour. Results from a multi-level path analysis showed that significant work events had both direct and indirect effects on negative emotional reactions. Hussaini, Akhtar, Inatullah, Afzai & Gillaini (2017) carried out a study on impact of leadership styles on work related stress among Nurses in Pakistan. The aim is to assess the impact of leadership styles among Nurses. A sample size of 180 Nurses was used for the study. The result indicated that transformational leadership style has significant negative correlation with workload, while transactional has significant positive relationship with work load.

Theoretical Framework

There are number of theories which could help in understanding issues relevant to CWB such as Social Exchange Theory, Social Learning Theory, and General Strain Theory. However, all these theories are useful to understand the causes of counterproductive work behaviour at the workplace. This study adopts the use of social exchange theory to explain leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour. It is believed that this theory would provide support to good leaders and subordinates relationship that would reduce counterproductive work behaviour. General strain theory also explains the issue of psychological distress

The Social Exchange Theory (SET)

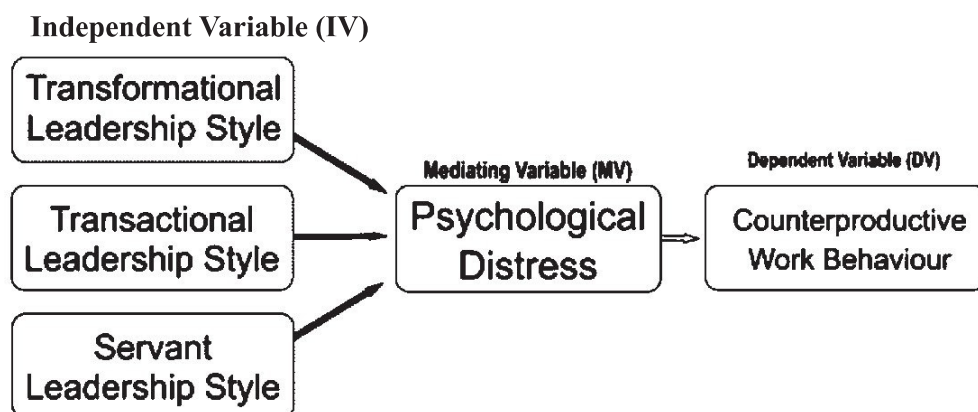
Social exchange theory proposes that a social behaviour is the result of an exchange process. According to this theory developed by Sociologist George Homan, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationship when the risks outweigh the reward, people will terminate or abandon that relationship. Social Exchange Theory is introduced to help understand CWB well in which this theory teaches the importance of interaction between individual differences factors and organization factors (Henle, 2005). It tries to explain counterproductive work behaviour among members in an organization. The basic principle of SET is an obligation; it exists when an individual wishes for a return each time he/she does good to others in which this is a must when time permits (Blau 1964). SET is used as a basis to understand the role of an organisation and its management parties as a means of obligation and the wanted behaviour (Wayne, et al. 2002). The assumption of an organisation support depends on the trust of each member which was formed depending on how well an organization recognised the contribution and cared about the welfare of its members. An individual who has high organisation support believed to have an obligation to reward his/her organisation (Eisenberger, et al, 1986).

General Strain Theory

This theory conceptualized by Agnew (2006) is also a theory about individual behaviour. The primary concern of this theory is that every individual who often worries about stressful experience at times will react unreasonably. This resulted in wrongdoings to get rid of the problems. For instance, an individual may attack his/her colleague or get involved in CWB to reduce his/her stress. This theory explains that a stressful individual is prone to get involved in CWB activities (Agnew, 2006). This theory explains that due to stressful emotion, violence elements exist in CWB.

In line with the literature, this paper comes up with the framework of the relationship of leadership style and counterproductive work behaviour with a mediating effect of psychological distress. The conceptual framework is a pictorial representation of the relationship between the variables. Meanwhile, the framework if properly articulated and presented, assist the researcher in making meaning of the findings of the course under review. It can be used to explain the possible connections and relationship between the variables of the course (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Hence, the proposed conceptual framework of the study, explains the relationship that exists between the independent variables and dependent variable of the study is presented below.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study.



Source: Research Survey, (2019)

The conceptual framework above represents the relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour with a mediating effect of psychological distress. As shown by the framework, leadership style is the independent variable (IV) of the study and is proxied by

transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles. Psychological distress is the mediator and counterproductive work behaviour is the dependent variable.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study was a content analysis of existing literature on the mediating effect of psychological distress on the relationship between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examines the conceptual relationship between leadership style and counterproductive work behaviour, and psychological distress. The paper attempt to establish the relationship that exists between the variables of the study, in which leadership style is used to represent the independent variable and proxied by transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles. Also, counterproductive work behaviour is used as dependent variable, and psychological distress as a mediating variable. In line with the existing literature, the study concludes that leadership style affects counterproductive work behaviour and that the relationship is strong and positive. This corroborates with the findings of Tsuno & Kawakami (2015); Novrianti & Santoso (2014); Kessler, Bruusema, Rodopman & Spector (2013); and Howladar, Rahman & Uddin (2018). In addition, the conceptual framework signifies the importance of leadership style in reducing psychological distress and counterproductive work behaviour. In the light of the foregoing, the study recommends that organizations should make sure that they have a good leadership style in place, which will reduce counterproductive work behaviour in organizations. Organisations should also create a stress -free environment s to avoid cases of counterproductive work behaviour.

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