



RESPONSIBILITY-SEEKING, EMPOWERMENT AND SUPERVISORY CONTROL AMONG NIGERIAN MANAGERS FROM THREE ETHNIC GROUPS

Andrew A. Mogaji

Article's History

Received: 10th November,
2024

Revised: 25th December, 2024

Accepted: 4th February, 2025

Abstract

This study was aimed at finding ethnic differences in responsibility-seeking, empowerment and supervisory control among Nigerian managers. Data were collected from 537 managerial employees randomly selected from among the MBA executive part-time students in Lagos, Nigeria. The sample included 176 Yoruba, 147 Igbo, 198 Hausa/Fulani and 16 unclassified managerial employees of different private and public organizations within the country. The participants responded to the 57-item Work Opinion Survey (WOPS) designed by Mendonca & Kanungo (1994). Analysis of data was restricted to the relevant sub-scales measuring the variables of interest mentioned above. The One-way ANOVA results confirmed the hypothesis of significant ethnic differences in responsibility-seeking ($F=8.24$, $df=3/533$, $p<.01$), empowerment ($F=11.11$, $df=3/533$, $p<.01$) and supervisory control ($F=9.11$, $df=3/533$, $p<.01$) respectively. The results were discussed in terms of their implications for the variations in the historical, religious and economic background of the people from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Authors' Affiliation

Department of Psychology,
Benue State University,
Makurdi, Nigeria,

Keywords: *empowerment, supervision, responsibility seeking, workers*

INTRODUCTION

The uncritical adoption of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and techniques evolved in the context of Western cultural values may not be effective in other socio-cultural environments (Aycan et al. 2000). That is why this study is aimed at examining the Nigerian managers' perceptions and assumptions about responsibility-seeking, empowerment and supervisory control.

Responsibility-seeking is an internal work culture dimension (McGregor, 1960). It is the managerial assumption regarding whether or not employees accept and seek responsibility in their job. Aycan et al. (2000) expected this assumption to be influenced by fatalism. In fatalistic cultures, people may shy away from taking responsibility, expecting that their extra effort will not necessarily yield desired outcomes. Therefore, managers who perceive high fatalism in their cultures are likely to assume that employees, by nature, are not willing to accept and seek responsibility.

Empowerment or empowering supervision and supervisory control are HRM practices. Empowering supervision is the extent to which managers encourage and provide support to employees to handle difficult assignments on their own (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Supervisory control is all about whether managers provide appropriate supervision rather than adopt a 'laissez-faire' style (Likert, 1961).

The model of culture-fit proposed by Kanungo and his associates (Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990; Mendonca & Kanungo, 1994) was used to guide this study. The model asserts that both the socio-cultural environment and the enterprise environment affect internal work culture and HRM practices. Organizational culture or the internal work culture operating within the organization is construed as a pattern of shared managerial beliefs and assumptions about employees' nature and behaviours (Schein, 1992) that directly influence HRM practices.

Hypothesis: There will be significant differences in responsibility-seeking, empowerment, and supervisory control among Nigerian managers from the three ethnic groups.

METHOD

Participants

The subjects for this study comprised 521 employees drawn from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The sample included 176 Yoruba managerial employees, 147 Igbo managerial employees, 198 Hausa/ Fulani managerial employees and 16 unclassified managerial employees. Participants were randomly selected from among the MBA executive part-time students who were employees of various public and private sector business organisations in Lagos, Nigeria.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the Work Opinion Survey (WOPS) designed by Mendonca & Kanungo (1994). The questionnaire had four parts. The first part asked for demographic information. In the second, third and fourth parts, dimensions of socio-cultural environment, internal work culture and HRM practices were assessed, respectively, using a total of 57 statements. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a six point Likert –type scale (1= strongly disagree; 6= strongly agree). One third of the items were reverse-coded to minimize response bias. Subscales were coded in such a way that scores reflected the variable name (for example, a high score on the empowerment scale indicate high empowerment). Psychometric properties of the measures were reported by Mathur, Aycan, & Kanungo (1996). The adequacy of the psychometric properties of scales (especially internal consistency) was tested and confirmed for each of the 3 samples by Mogaji (2006).

In this study, participants evaluated the internal work culture of their organizations by reporting prevailing managerial assumptions on responsibility-seeking. In the area of HRM, empowering supervision and supervisory control were assessed.

Procedure

The questionnaire which was developed in English language was administered in its original language. It was administered to the subjects in the classroom during their lecture in Business Organization and Administration. It took them less than 30 minutes on the average to complete. Even though they responded to all the items of WOPS, analysis of data was restrained to the relevant sub-scales measuring the variables of interest.

RESULTS

Table 1
Mean Scores and standard Deviation of Measures according to Ethnic Group

	YORUBA		IGBO		HAUSA/FULANI	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Responsibility-seeking	4.32	1.12	4.13	1.09	3.78	1.05
Empowerment	4.53	1.28	4.43	1.38	4.01	1.23
Supervisory control	4.70	1.44	4.76	1.36	4.04	1.55

The results in Table 1 show that Yoruba managers had the highest mean score in responsibility-seeking and empowerment practices while the Igbo managers had the highest mean score in supervisory control.

Table 2
One-way ANOVA Summary Table showing Differences in Measures according to Ethnicity

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F
Responsibility-seeking	Between Groups	28.897	3	9.632	8.241**
	Within Groups	621.821	533	1.169	
	Total	650.718	536		
Empowerment	Between Groups	33.485	3	1.162	6.642**
	Within Groups	895.763	533	1.681	
	Total	929.249	536		
Supervisory control	Between Groups	59.346	3	19.782	9.113**
	Within Groups	1157.043	533	2.171	
	Total	1216.389	536		

Note:

* = $p < .05$, $df = (3/533)$. ** = $p < .01$, $df = (3/533)$.

$F(.05) = 2.61$

$F(.01) = 3.80$

The results in Table 2 show that significant differences were found among the three major ethnic groups in the three measures: responsibility-seeking, empowerment and supervisory control at $p < .01$ respectively.

DISCUSSION

It can be extrapolated from the study that responsibility-seeking and empowerment practices are highest among the Yoruba managers followed by the Igbo and Hausa/Fulani managers. This means that managers who perceive and assume that employees must seek responsibility, also engage in empowering human resource management practices (Mogaji, 2006). Supervisory control is however, highest among the Igbo managers followed by the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani managers.

The results are supported by the historical, religious and economic backgrounds of the three ethnic groups. Eze (1978) investigated and explained that ethnic group affiliations and speaking of ethnic languages in work situations in Nigeria breed inter-ethnic rivalries, mistrust and suspicions. He did not provide evidence of which group affiliates most than the others. But the results of this study have implications for determining factors that can enhance the management of inter-ethnic conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This study is among the few attempts made to provide insights into the issue of how organizational culture and HRM practices show variance in Nigeria. The attempt is significant for a number of reasons. First, this research answers the question of how culture is related to HRM practices. Second, findings show that responsibility-seeking, a dimension of internal work culture and empowerment practices and supervisory control are dimensions of HRM practices, provided significant differences among the three ethnic groups. Third, the three ethnic groups included in this study, have various historical, religious and economic backgrounds that supported the findings of this study. Since not much research has been conducted in this area, this study has contributed to the cumulation of knowledge in this area.

REFERENCES

- Aycan, Z; Kanungo, R.N; Mendonca, M; Yu K; Deller, J; Stahl, G. & Kurshid, A.(2000). Impact of culture on human resource management practices: A 10-country comparison. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49, (192-22).
- Eze,N. (1978). Ethnic group affiliation and work motivation in third world nations. *Management in Nigeria* 14, (4), 8-23.
- Kanungo, R.N. & Jaeger, A.M . (1990). Introduction: The need for indigenous management in developing countries. In A.M. Jaeger & R.N. Kanungo (eds.), *Management in Developing Countries* (pp. 1-23). London: Routledge.
- Mathur, P; Aycan, Z; Kanungo, R.N. (1996). Indian organizational culture: A comparison between public and private sectors. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 8, (2), 199-222.
- Mendonca, M. & Kanungo, R.N. (1992). Managing human resources: the issue of culture-fit. *Journal of Management Inquiry*,3, (2), 189-205.
- Mogaji, A.A. (2006). Culture and human resource management practices: Model of culture-fit in Nigerian context. *Paper presented at the 7th IACCP European Regional Congress, San Sebastian, Spain (July, 11-15)*.
- Schein, E.H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.