



Ethical Leadership and Employee Engagement of Insurance Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Fubara Boma Judith¹ & B. Chima Onuoha²

¹Doctoral Student, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt

²Professor of Management, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt

Abstract: *The present study presents an exploration of the link between ethical leadership and the work engagement of employees of insurance companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This study used the cross-sectional survey design and a sample size of 127 selected across 10 insurance firms operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Data for the study was obtained through the questionnaire adapted from previous studies and administered to the respondents by the researcher. Having administered the questionnaire, 118 of the questionnaires were correctly filled and completed, hence 118 was used for the study. The analysis of the data was carried out using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The result of the study found a positive and significant relationship between leadership integrity and the measures of employee engagement i.e. vigour and dedication. The study further found a positive correlation between leadership fairness and the measures of employee engagement. The study concluded that for organizations to have well engaged employees, they must ensure that there is leadership integrity and fairness amount the leaders of insurance firms. The study recommended that fairness should be encouraged at all leadership levels in order to ensure that employees are dedicated and engaged in their work which will ultimately promote the performance of the organization and reduce employee turnover.*

Keywords: *Ethical Leadership, Employee Engagement, Dedication, Leadership Fairness, Leadership Integrity, Vigour.*

Background to the Study

Businesses operating in Nigeria face an unpredictable climate, and only those with highly engaged staff will be able to survive in this period of high service company liquidation rates worldwide. Employee engagement is important because it makes businesses more competitive and increases their effectiveness and efficiency, all of which may have a favorable influence on the success of the company. There is no denying the significance of employee engagement for businesses that need to remain adaptable in a volatile climate. Consistent with the aforementioned claim, Osborne and Hammoud (2017) argued that employee engagement has a significant impact on how long a company survives. Employee engagement, according to Mohan, Haque, and Khan (2018), is the emotional commitment that employees have to their company and the actions they do to make the company successful. Staff members that are engaged demonstrate concern, zeal, responsibility, and dedication. Engaged workers demonstrate their concern for the company by making extra effort. They feel obligated and dedicated, thus they always do their hardest to finish a task. They defend their company because they are pleased to work for it, and when employees are engaged, it further inspires them to solve problems and come up with new ideas on how to make the company better (Clement & Eketu, 2019).

Employee engagement, according to Kim, Ham, and Park (2019), is defined as each person's level of pleasure, involvement, and excitement for their job. Positive psychological states that are typified by zeal, vigor, and devotion are known as employee engagement. According to Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004), employee engagement is a result of a favorable attitude that each person has for the company and its principles. Moreover, Musgrove, Ellinger, and Ellinger (2014) contended that employee dedication determines an organization's productivity. A worker who is totally committed to the company understands the business environment and collaborates with colleagues to improve performance for the good of the company. For every business to get the most out of its workforce, engagement must be developed and nurtured. However, maintaining employee engagement is crucial for lowering the workplace turnover rate (Robertssmith & Markwick, 2009). The degree of employee involvement significantly affects employee attitudes, absenteeism, and turnover within a company. According to Oliveira and Rocha (2017), employee engagement entails a worker's emotional, mental, and physical commitment to their jobs inside the company.

Notwithstanding, workers in the organization are reflective being and their participation in the workplace may be impacted by the ethics of the leadership in the firm. As argued by Bellingham (2003), The connection between the leader and followers as a whole is probably going to be considerably influenced by ethical leadership. Ethics in leadership, according to Brown and Trevino (2005), includes modeling normatively appropriate conduct in one's own actions and relationships with others, and then motivating followers to do the same through decision-making, two-way communication, and reinforcement. Shakeel et al. (2020) define ethical leadership as the active and implicit pursuit of desired ethical behavior for oneself and followers through actions guided by norms and principles that support learning motivation, a healthy optimism, and purpose clarity to uphold the values of empowerment, respect for human rights, change for the better, and fulfilling obligations to the environment, future generations, society, and sustainability.

Employee engagement is a crucial success component that may be harmful to the firm if it is ignored. Observation over time has shown that there is a high prevalence of employee disengagement in Nigerian insurance companies for a variety of reasons, including poor compensation, unattainable expectations, work stress, and job burnout. The issue of poor employee engagement has had a significant impact on the caliber of services provided by insurance companies. Umoh, Amah, and Wokocha (2014) noted that companies in Nigeria are dealing with an issue with talented workers leaving their jobs lately, and insurance companies are not an exception. The high liquidation of firms in present time has made it imperative for organization to ensure that their employees are well engaged as such could help maintain their competitive stand in the industry.

The observed low engagement does manifest in the form of absenteeism, cynical behaviour and turnover which could negatively affect the success of the insurance firms. Furthermore, the exit of employees due to lack of engagement, affect the effective flow of the organizational practices and processes which again is not healthy for the wellbeing of the firm. Scholars over the years has investigated various was to enhance the engagement of employees in organizations. Quadri (2022) examined how supervisor and co-workers relationship relates with employee engagement

of law firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Khuong and Dung (2015) in their study examined the effect of ethical leadership and organizational justice on employee engagement of technical companies in Vietnam. Adnan, Bhatti and Farooq (2020), examined the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement with the mediation of workplace spirituality. In yet another study, Mostafa and El-Motalib (2020) examined ethical leadership, work meaningfulness and work engagement in the public sector. On the other hand, Sahni (2019) examined how quality of work life relates with the engagement of employees in telecom firms in Saudi Arabia. Despite the various scholarly work from extant literature, there is scanty empirical work within the Nigerian work environment and specifically in the insurance sector that has examined the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement. It is as a result of this observed gap that has informed the researcher to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement of insurance firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement of insurance firms in Port Harcourt. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To examine the relationship between leadership integrity and vigour of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.
- ii. To examine the relationship between leadership fairness and vigour of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.
- iii. To examine the relationship between leadership integrity and dedication of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.
- iv. To examine the relationship between leadership fairness and dedication of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Hypothesis

H₁: To examine the relationship between leadership integrity and vigour of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.

H₂: To examine the relationship between leadership fairness and vigour of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.

H₃: To examine the relationship between leadership integrity and dedication of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.

H₄: To examine the relationship between leadership fairness and dedication of employees of insurance firms in Port Harcourt.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Review: Social Learning Theory and Social Exchange Theory

A crucial component of organizational dynamics is ethical leadership, especially when it comes to insurance businesses. According to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, people pick up and modify their actions by watching and picking up knowledge from role models—like the organization's leaders. Within the insurance industry, employee engagement and behavior are greatly influenced by ethical leadership. According to social learning theory, people pick up moral conduct by imitating and watching the actions of peers and leaders. Examine how moral leadership impacts employee engagement and moral conduct by setting an example. As a

relevant theory associated with ethical leadership in organizations and the ability to maintain a favorable microclimate in teams, social learning theory may be reviewed. According to Mo and Shi (2017), who analyze this concept in relation to organizational performance, employees tend to show greater trust and loyalty to leaders who adhere to ethical principles of interaction. They further provided empirical results from evaluating the application of this concept; as they note, employees with high organizational concern motives are more likely to put the goals of the organization and coworkers ahead of their own goals, which is achieved through ethical leadership (Mo & Shi, 2017). In the context of this study, social learning theory plays an essential role as a framework that acts as a stimulus for the adoption of appropriate behaviors and interaction mechanisms in a team and promotes productive communication through a role model of effective and ethical leadership. While taking into account the provisions of this theory, leaders act as coordinators who shape the appropriate principles of interaction in a team, which, in turn, meet the goals and objectives of a particular organization (StudyCorgi, 2023).

Social Exchange Theory

Through the perspective of social exchange theory, it is possible to gain a clear understanding of the link between ethical leadership and employee engagement in insurance organizations. According to social exchange theory, people form relationships—including professional ones—based on a reciprocal exchange of advantages and resources (Blau, 1964). Within the insurance industry, moral leadership is seen as a vital asset that managers offer to their staff. Insurance firms frequently handle difficult moral dilemmas including underwriting, sales tactics, and claim handling. According to Brown and Treviño (2006), executives in this business are expected to demonstrate honesty, integrity, and a strong adherence to moral ideals while making decisions. The social interaction between managers and staff is positively impacted by this kind of leadership conduct. Emerson (1976) introduced the social exchange theory, an influential behavioral theory that offers several perspectives on how a sequence of contacts between persons results in sentiments of duty, trust, and thankfulness. According to social exchange theory, managers may influence employees' behavioral responses by implementing a reciprocity and incentive system, which fosters mutually beneficial exchanges between the parties. This theory states that the reciprocal relationship that results from the exchange partners' two-sided interdependence favorably drives people by fostering social outcomes like loyalty, devotion, and trust (Cropanzano, et al., 2017). Consequently, the cycle of reciprocity is set in motion by a leader's kindness, concern, honesty, and fairness, which results in compassionate staff actions (O'Keefe et al., 2018). In the context of insurance companies, engaged employees are more likely to go the extra mile in their roles, resulting in improved service quality, client satisfaction, and overall company performance.

Concept of Ethical Leadership

Because it explicitly emphasizes the ethical side of leadership, ethical leadership is distinct from other positive leadership philosophies (Wang & Xu, 2017). The moral manager and the moral individual are its two primary features (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Moral leaders individually uphold moral principles like justice, fairness, integrity, and selflessness because they are moral

people. Being moral leaders, they take proactive steps to encourage moral conduct among their followers, such as outlining moral expectations and praising staff for moral compliance. Generally speaking, moral leaders employ normative management to direct their subordinates according to moral principles even when official organizational standards are not there (Yang, Ding, & Lo, 2016). According to Brown and Mitchell (2010), fair and highly trusted by their staff are characteristics of ethical leaders. Additionally, they assist and care for its staff members. Employees will thus be more likely to reciprocate by putting in more effort and become much more invested in their work (Engelbrecht, Heine & Mahembe, 2017). According to Brown et al. (2005), moral leaders set an example of normatively acceptable behavior for their followers by their own acts and interpersonal relationships, as well as by offering support, communicating with them both ways, and making choices that are consistent with those standards. Spangenberg and Theron (2005) state that ethical leadership comprises preparing the organization, its members, its structures, and its culture for implementation as well as creating and sharing an ethical vision (based on a detailed assessment of the internal and external environments in which all relevant parties are involved).

According to Riggio et al. (2010), an ethical leader upholds the four cardinal qualities of justice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence inside their organization. Similar to this, Yukl et al. (2013) observed that moral leaders refrain from actions that might endanger others while yet acting in ways that help others. Ethical leadership, according to Langlois et al. (2014), is a social activity that permits the autonomous application of professional judgment. It is a resource with a solid basis in the capacity to behave morally and responsibly as well as the three ethical pillars of critique, compassion, and justice. As per Shakeel et al. (2020), ethical leadership involves actively pursuing ethical behavior that one desires for oneself and others, both consciously and unconsciously. This is achieved through actions that are guided by norms and principles that promote learning motivation, a positive outlook, and a distinct purpose of upholding human rights, empowerment, and meeting responsibilities towards the environment, future generations, society, and sustainability.

Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

Leadership Integrity

From the Latin word *integritas*, integrity defines the personal values which direct a leader's behavior (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). A commitment to principles, according to Azuka (2009), is what great leaders hold in common. Employees appreciate, admire, and embrace this dedication to moral behavior since it signals the expectation of fair play in all interactions, regardless of religious background. Integrity is a company characteristic that employees respect when working with executives, according to Koehn (2005). Tulberg (2012) asserts that companies that value integrity highly provide a better work environment for their employees and grow into more competitive companies that value individuality. Thus, a better standard of goods and services that the customer enjoys is ensured by this commitment to the individual and to strong personal values. In contrast to integrity, corruption seeks to create a dysfunctional business with unmet objectives and a lack of commitment from staff members toward those objectives.

Leadership Fairness

Fairness presents moral leaders as honorable, transparent, and egalitarian. regulates behavior and instills in individuals the value of respecting the rights of others. Workplace attitudes and actions have been demonstrated to be strongly predicted by organizational justice (Wang et al., 2010). Justice among peers is a major priority for workers, according to Reave (2005), as everyone wants to be recognized for their achievements. Justice therefore motivates employees to do well as it ensures that they will be given the proper credit and benefits. As a result, the leader is accountable for implementing justice in an unbiased manner. Furthermore, fairness applied correctly fosters a feeling of justice, which improves workplace citizenship and openness of personal values (Ajala, 2016). Leaders need to use caution when it comes to showing preference in social, generational, or stereotyped circumstances. This biased attitude contradicts the fairness that ought to be used while evaluating performance. Employees may behave negatively and even abnormally in the workplace as a result of receiving such unjust treatment (Syaebani & Sobi, 2011).

Concept of Employee Engagement

The degree to which workers dedicate themselves to a project or a coworker, how hard they work, and how long they plan to remain as a result of that dedication is known as employee engagement.

According to Chandhok and Bhavet (2014), engagement is the desire and commitment to dedicate oneself and increase one's discretionary effort in order to help the company as a whole achieve its aims and objectives. The degree to which workers think, feel, and behave in a way that demonstrates a strong sense of devotion to their company is known as employee engagement. According to Kahn (1990), during an encounter, individuals use their bodies, minds, and emotions to express and utilize who they are as actors. Each employee has a unique set of ideas, and they should all be allowed the opportunity to freely share those thoughts. Employee morale is raised by this sort of activity, which makes workers more engaged and motivated at work, ultimately increasing organizational productivity. He goes on to say that workers get disengaged due to a variety of factors, including a lack of emotional support from the business, a passive and incomplete role, and emotional absence.

According to Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004), employee engagement is strongly tied to how employees feel and perceive their work. The main factors that influence employee engagement are well-designed human resource policies, effective leadership from upper management, two-way communication between employees, and organizational development for employees. According to Anand (2011), staff involvement is critical to the hotel industry as it impacts all aspects, including profitability, safety, and productivity as well as retention. Shuck and Wollard (2010) define person engagement as the mental, emotional, and behavioral states of an individual who is committed to accomplishing certain company objectives. Schaufeli et al. (2002) define engagement as a joyful, constructive mental state characterized by zeal, devotion, and immersion during work. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2010), vigor is a behavioral-energetic, dedication-emotional, and absorption-cognitive aspect of job involvement.

Vigour

High levels of energy and mental fortitude when working, the determination to put effort into one's job, and perseverance in the face of adversity are characteristics of vigor, according to Schaufeli et al. (2002). The ability to work with great energy and mental endurance, the determination to give a job one's all, and the persistence in the face of difficulty are all signs of excitement (Schaufeli, 2017). Schaufeli (2007) states that having vigor while work entails having high levels of energy and cognitive resilience as well as a desire and tendency to put in a lot of effort and to persevere through perceived challenges. Workplace motivational processes and vigor are directly associated (Shirom, 2010).

Dedication

A person's sense of importance, zeal, inspiration, pride, and challenge are all components of dedication. When workers are engaged, their commitment levels are boosted to the extent that they perceive their job to be very significant. The ability to work hard and feel a feeling of purpose, excitement, inspiration, pride, and difficulties is referred to as dedication (Schaufeli, 2017). According to Schaufeli (2007), devotion is the condition of being fully absorbed in one's own work, characterized by feelings of challenge, inspiration, passion, pride, and self-worth. There are conceptual parallels between job participation and dedication: A deep psychological connection or identity with one's work is referred to as devotion (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). On the other hand, job participation indicates a person's psychological connection to a certain job or to labor in general (Kanungo, 1982). Furthermore, despite the lack of a strong argument about their differences, both notions are thought to be very stable occurrences. However, devotion appears to be a broader phenomenon than job involvement since it includes feelings such as pride, enthusiasm, inspiration, and challenge, whereas work engagement merely takes into account the psychological relevance of a job in an individual's life (Mauno et al., 2007).

Empirical Review

Adnan, Bhatti, and Baykal (2022) looked into the connection between moral leadership and employee engagement in the workplace from a multicultural standpoint. The study's objective was to investigate the perspectives of service industry executives about the impact of moral leadership on workers' job satisfaction in Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey. In order to gather information on ethical leadership, employee engagement, and meetings with leaders in the service sector, the study employed the purposeful sampling methodology to pick 28 executives in the industry and conduct semi-structured interviews with them. The results of the study showed that the respondents identified eight major ethical leadership themes, including trust, integrity, honesty, religiosity, and role modeling. They also showed that the degree of employee engagement in the service companies under study is influenced by the application of different ethical leadership strategies.

The link between coworkers and supervisors and employee engagement in legal businesses in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, was studied by Quadri (2022). The study's objective was to investigate the link between employee engagement at legal companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and the

relationships between supervisors and coworkers. Forty employees from certain legal firms were the population of the study, which employed a survey research design. Data was gathered through the use of a questionnaire, and the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was utilized to analyze the data. The study discovered a strong and favorable correlation between employee involvement in legal businesses and the support of peers and supervisors.

Mostafa and El-Motalib (2020) looked at work engagement, meaningfulness of work, and ethical leadership in the Egyptian public sector in another research. Examining the link between moral leadership and employee outcomes while controlling for job meaning was the goal. A sample of Egyptian public hospital nurses was employed in the study. Questionnaires were used to gather data for the study, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was used for analysis. The study discovered that the association between moral leaders and worker engagement was mediated by the meaningfulness of the activity. The outcome further demonstrated a favorable correlation between moral leadership and worker engagement.

Integrity, moral leadership, trust, and employee engagement are highlighted by Engelbrecht, Heine, and Mahembe (2017). The study's objective was to investigate the relationship between employee trust in the leader and work engagement and the integrity and ethical leadership of those in leadership roles. 204 workers from various corporate organizations completed a web-based survey instrument to provide data for the study. Item analysis and confirmatory analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data. The study's conclusions demonstrated a favorable relationship between employee job engagement, ethical conduct of trust, and leadership integrity. The study also discovered that the connection between employee trust and engagement and leadership integrity is mediated by ethical leadership.

In their research, Khuong and Dung (2015) investigated how employee engagement in technical enterprises in Vietnam was impacted by moral leadership and organizational justice. The purpose of the study was to investigate how employee trust and engagement in technical Vietnamese enterprises are impacted by several variables, including organizational justice, ethical leadership, and ethic-based contingent incentive. Three hundred and twelve (312) technicians in the study region made up the study sample, and primary data were gathered through the distribution of questionnaires. Multiple regression, path analysis, and exploratory factors analysis were used to analyze the data gathered for the study. The study's conclusions demonstrated that contingent rewards based on ethnicity and moral leadership both directly affect worker engagement levels. Furthermore, when considering employee confidence in a company, the study found that neither organizational justice nor the previously described criteria had a direct impact on employee engagement levels. Thus, it was determined that an organization's degree of employee involvement is greatly influenced by justice, ethics, and compensation.

Methodology

The cross sectional survey design was used for this study. The target population covers employees of 33 insurance companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. However, the accessible population of the study was 189 employees selected from ten (10) insurance companies. The selection of these firms was based on ease of accessibility and the fact that they are quoted in the Nigerian Stock

Exchange (NSE). The simple random sampling technique was used on every one of the ten selected companies in this research while the Krejcie and Morgan table was used in determining the sample size of the study with a 95% confidence level. Therefore, from the table, the sample size is 127. The data for the study was obtained using a structured questionnaire adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire items were measured on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 – 4. Where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagreed, 4 = Strongly disagree. The spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient was used in analyzing the stated hypothesis through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion

This section gives an analysis of the hypotheses testing. Spearman Correlation statistical tool was used for this study with the aid of SPSS to test the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement of insurance companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Out of the 127 questionnaires distributed, only 118 of them were returned and correctly filled and therefore will be used for this study. Spearman Correlation was used to test the relationship between variables understudy. The decision rule was to reject the null hypotheses where $p \leq 0.05$ significant level and accept the null hypotheses where $p > 0.05$. Four bivariate hypotheses were tested in the null form.

Table 1: Leadership Integrity and Employee Vigour

			Correlations	
			Leadership Integrity	Employee Vigour
Spearman's rho	Leadership Integrity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.866**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	118	118
	Employee Vigour	Correlation Coefficient	.866**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	118	118

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

Table 1 shows Spearman Correlation of the relationship between leadership integrity and employee vigour. The result shows $\rho = 0.866$ indicating a strong positive relationship between leadership integrity and employee vigour. This implies that an increase in the leadership integrity will enhance employee vigour. The result shows a significant level of $p = 0.000$ which is less than 0.05; concluding that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained that there is a significant relationship between leadership integrity and employee vigour in insurance companies in Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.

Table 2: Leadership Fairness and Employee Vigour

			Correlations	
			Leadership Integrity	Employee Vigour
Spearman's rho	Leadership Fairness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.754**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	118	118
	Employee Vigour	Correlation Coefficient	.754**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	118	118

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

Table 2 shows the correlation of the relationship between leadership fairness and employee vigour. The result shows rho=0.754 indicating a strong positive relationship between leadership fairness and employee vigour. This implies that a change in the level of leadership fairness will influence a change in the level of employee vigour and vice versa. The result indicates a significant level of p=0.000 which is less than 0.05; concluding that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained that there is a significant relationship between leadership fairness and employee vigour of insurance companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Table 3: Leadership Integrity and Employee Dedication Correlations

			Leadership Integrity	Employee Dedication
Spearman's rho	Leadership Integrity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.312**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	118	118
	Employee Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.312**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	118	118

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

The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows a significant level $p < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), $\rho = 0.312$ between Leadership Integrity and Employee Dedication. This means that there is a significant relationship between Leadership Integrity and Employee Dedication. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that there is a significant relationship between Leadership Integrity and Employee Dedication.

Table 4: Leadership Fairness and Employee Dedication Correlations

			Leadership Fairness	Employee Dedication
Spearman's rho	Leadership Fairness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.543**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	118	118
	Employee Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.543**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	118	118

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

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 4 shows a significant level $p < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), $\rho = 0.543$ between leadership fairness and employee dedication. This means that there is a significant relationship between leadership fairness and employee dedication. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that there is a significant relationship between leadership fairness and employee dedication.

Discussion of Findings

Leadership Integrity and Employee Vigour

The analysis result on the relationship between leadership integrity and employee vigour showed $\rho=0.866$ indicating a strong positive relationship between leadership integrity and employee vigour. This implies that an increase in the leadership integrity will enhance employee vigour. The findings corroborates the study of Engelbrecht, Heine, and Mahembe (2017) whose study found that the leadership integrity in an organization strongly influences the level of employee engagement.

Leadership Fairness and Employee Vigour

The result of hypothesis 2 shows $\rho=0.754$ indicating a strong positive relationship between leadership fairness and employee vigour. This implies that a change in the level of leadership fairness will influence a change in the level of employee vigour and vice versa. This study agrees with the study of Adnan, Bhatti and Baykal (2022) whose study found that ethical leadership in terms of trust, integrity, honesty and fairness influences the level of employee engagement in service companies.

Leadership Integrity and Employee Dedication

The result of the analysis of hypothesis 3 shows a significant link between leadership integrity and employee dedication as supported by $\rho = 0.312$. This means that there is a significant relationship. This finding concurs with the study of Mostafa and El-Motalib (2020) who found a positive relationship between ethical leadership measures in terms of leadership integrity and employee engagement measured using dedication, vigour and absorption.

Leadership Fairness and Employee Dedication

The result of the analysis of hypothesis 4 shows a significant relationship between leadership fairness and employee dedication. This means that there is a significant relationship between leadership fairness and employee dedication. This study agrees with the study of Adnan, Bhatti and Baykal (2022) whose study found that ethical leadership in terms of trust, integrity, honesty and fairness influences the level of employee engagement in service companies. This also agrees with the study of Quadri (2022) who found that support from supervisor and co-workers enhances employee engagements.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that there is a positive and significant link between the dimensions of ethical leadership and the measures of employee engagement. Therefore, the perceived leadership fairness and integrity will enhance the level of employee engagement in insurance companies in terms of their dedication and vigour towards their work and the organization which will in turn enhance the performance of the organization.

Recommendations

Flowing from the study findings and conclusion, the study recommended as follows:

1. Management of insurance firms should make sure ethical leadership in terms of integrity of leader integrity should be practices in order to ensure that the employees are well engaged with the work and the organization as doing so will enhance the level of organizational productivity and overall performance.
2. Management of insurance firms should ensure that there is fairness on the part of the leadership in order to promote employee vigour as this will improve the rate of employee turnover while also retaining the bright talents in the organization.
3. Management of insurance firms should ensure integrity of leaders so as to get the employees to be dedicated to their work and help in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives.
4. Fairness should be encouraged across all leadership levels. Doing so will help the employees to be more dedicated to duties while also seeing the leaders as their role model in the course of carrying out their duties.

References

- Adnan, N., Bhatti, O.K. & Baykal, E. (2022). A Phenomenological Investigation on Ethical Leadership and Workplace Engagement from a Multi-Cultural Perspective. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 11, 206 – 234.
- Adnan, N., Bhatti, O.K. & Farooq, W. (2020). Relating ethical leadership with work engagement: How workplace spirituality mediates?, *Cogent Business & Management*, 7(1), 1 – 22, DOI:10.1080/23311975.2020.1739494
- Ajala, A.J. and Badarulzaman, N.A., 2016. Performance Assessment of Physico-Mechanical Properties of Aloi Fireclay Brick. *International Journal of Integrated Engineering*, 8(2), 55 – 72.
- Azuka, E.B., 2009. Ethics of leadership and the integrity question among leaders. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal*, 17(1), 11-26.
- Bellingham, R. (2003). *Ethical Leadership Rebuilding Trust in Corporations*. Canada: HRD Press, Inc.
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Wiley.
- Brown, M. E., & Mitchell, M. S. (2010). Ethical and unethical leadership: Exploring new avenues for future research. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 20, 583-616.
- Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595-616.

Brown, M. E., Trevino, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97, 117-134.

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E.L., Daniels, S.R. & Hall, A.V., (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of management annals*, 11(1), 479-516.

Emerson, T.I., (1976). *Legal foundations of the right to know*. Wash. ULQ, 1.

Engelbrecht, A.S., Heine, G., & Mahembe, B. (2017). Integrity, ethical leadership, trust and work engagement. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 38(3), 368-379.

Khuong, M.N. & Dung, D.T.T. (2015). The Effect of Ethical Leadership and Organizational Justice on Employee Engagement – The Mediating Role of Employee Trust. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*, 6(4), 235 – 240.

Koehn, D., (2005). Integrity as a business asset. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 58, 125-136.

Langlois, L., Lapointe, C., Valois, P., & de Leeuw, A. (2014). Development and validity of the ethical leadership questionnaire. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(3), 310–331.

Liden, R.C., Sparrowe, R.T. & Wayne, S.J., (1997). Leader-member exchange theory: The past and potential for the future.

Mo, S., & Shi, J. (2017). Linking ethical leadership to employees' organizational citizenship behavior: Testing the multilevel mediation role of organizational concern. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 141(1), 151-162.

O'Keefe, P.A., Dweck, C.S. & Walton, G.M., (2018). Implicit theories of interest: *Finding your passion or developing it?*. *Psychological science*, 29(10), 1653-1664.

Peterson, C. & Seligman, M.E., (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

Quadri, L.A. (2022). Supervisor and Co-Workers Relationship and Employee Engagement of Law Firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Accounting, Finance & Management Research (IJAAFMR)*, 6(2), 1 – 10.

Reave, L., 2005. Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(5), 655-687.

Shakeel, F., Kruyen, P. M., & Thiel, S. V. (2020). Development of a broader conceptualization and measurement scale of ethical leadership. *The Journal of value-Based Leadership*, 13(1), 1 - 13.

Spangenberg, H., & Theron, C. C. (2005). Promoting ethical follower behaviour through leadership of ethics: The development of the ethical leadership inventory (ELI). *South African Journal of Business Management*, 36(2), 1–18.

StudyCorgi. (2023, August 16). Ethical Leadership and Social Learning Theory. <https://studycorgi.com/ethical-leadership-and-social-learning-theory/>

Syaebani, M. I. and Sobri, R. R. (2011). Relationship between organizational justice perception and engagement in deviant workplace behavior. *The South East Asian Journal of Management*, 5(1), 37- 49.

Tullberg, J. (2012). Integrity-clarifying and upgrading an important concept for business ethics. *Business and Society Review*, 117(1), 89.

Wang, Y.-D., & Hsieh, H.-H. (2012). Toward a better understanding of the link between ethical climate and job satisfaction: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 105(4), 535-545.

Wang, Z., & Xu, H. (2017). When and for whom ethical leadership is more effective in eliciting work meaningfulness and positive attitudes: The moderating roles of core self-evaluation and perceived organizational support. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-22.

Yang, C., Ding, C. G., & Lo, K. W. (2016). Ethical leadership and multidimensional organizational citizenship behaviors: The mediating effects of self-efficacy, respect, and leader– member exchange. *Group & Organization Management*, 41, 343-374.

Yukl, G., Mahsud, R., Hassan, S., & Prussia, G. E. (2013). An improved measure of ethical leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 20(1), 38–48.