

Leaders' Ethical Behaviour as Predictor of Affective Commitment to Squads among Cadets of Nigeria Police Academy

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Abstract

Group members' Affective Commitment is needed for the necessary cohesion that is expected of any assembly or collection of people pursuing same goal. What leadership quality among others is required of a leader to enable followers' passionate allegiance to the collective objectives? The aim of this study is to use leader's ethical behaviours to forecast affective commitment to squad pursuit among Police cadets. Subordinate cadets were asked to rate the ethical leadership behaviours demonstrated by their cadet Leaders and also rate their own affective commitment to their squads (N = 252, \bar{X} Age = 22.70, Age range = 17 to 29 years, SD = 2.264, 75% males); employing a correlational design, subordinates' affective commitment was then regressed on leaders' ethical behaviours using a linear regression technique, after satisfying the statistical conditions for a same-level analysis. Subordinate Cadets' rating of Ethical Leadership show a significant independent prediction of Subordinate Cadets' Affective Commitment ($\beta = .436, p = .000$); and it is found to explain 21.6% of the variance in Affective commitment in the result from this study ($R^2 = .216, F(1,251) = 66.254, 95\% CI [.250, .409], p = .000$). It is being submitted that ethical leadership behaviours facilitate affective commitment and could engender group unity and national development. To ensure group and social cohesion, affective commitment of group members must be present.

Keywords: *Affective commitment, ethical leadership behaviour, subordinate cadets, leader cadets, cohesion.*

Introduction

The Police occupy and play leadership role in the society. This is evident from the powers conferred on the Police in the Nigeria Police Act Part II Section 4. This

section gives the police officers the authority to protect lives and properties; to prevent and detect crimes and apprehend offenders. It also empowers the police to preserve law and order; to enforce the laws and regulations; and perform military functions that are

assigned to them (General duties of the Police 1979 Force; Police Acts Part II Section 4). It is being asked if there are any leader and follower qualities relationship within prospective police officers that can be referred to the society at large. If there is, one could transpose or move this relationship to reflect what might be obtainable in the country. In essence, it is hoped that the findings of the present study using a Police ASP cadets' sample, can be used to illustrate desirable leader-follower transaction that can possibly bring about commitment which can translate to cohesion and progress at the national level for the general citizenry.

Leadership has been the center point and emphasis of a great magnitude of academic research, as business organizations, government agencies and parastatals, military and paramilitary set-up strive to find the features of good leaders and to acknowledge and build on these characteristics (Silverthorne, 2005, p. 57). The prevalence of questionable leadership qualities and conduct spurs the need for leaders who demonstrate ethical and moral attributes. These desirable leader qualities, in turn, prompt positive follower or subordinate behaviour. What are some of the leader and follower dynamics that ensure commitment and accountability to national cause? Who does the leader have to be? How must the followers feel? These are few questions that when answered could be an indicator of national identity; social cohesion and a collective strive towards national development. There are leader and subordinate qualities that could foster national development. Leaders manifest

these characters and followers reciprocate with appropriate or desirable behaviours to achieve common national interest.

Organizations and groups have been used as microcosm to demonstrate some of these leader-follower features (e.g. Chou, 2013; Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli 2001; Zheng et al., 2015) Many times followers seek ethical guidance by looking outward, that is, possibly to significant others such as their leaders (Kohlberg, 1969; Trevino, 1986). Leaders' ethical behaviours among other qualities elicit varying subordinates' positive conducts (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005); such as performance and organizational identification (Walumbwa et al., 2011); job satisfaction and commitment (Kim & Brymer, 2011); and follower identifications (Zhu, He, Trevino, Chao & Wang, 2015).

Ethical leadership being an independent construct has been found to share a dimension of transformational leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner, 2002); it has been associated with social cohesion (Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur & Hardy, 2009); group cohesion (Zheng et al., 2015); and affective and normative commitment (Ramachandra & Krishnan, 2009). Ethical leadership has been defined and constructed as: "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005;

Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003; Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000).

When individuals are emotionally and passionately bound to their group(s) they are construed as demonstrating affective commitment towards the group(s). Affective commitment is a member's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the group (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment has been suggested as a significant contributing factor to allegiance and dedication especially when there is perceived group support and assistance (Rhoades et al., 2001). Of all the forms of commitment in organizations or groups, Mecurio (2015) identified affective commitment as the principal and the most essential component. And he did suggest that the nuance often encountered as regard the forms of organizational commitment results from its use among varying disciplines; and psychology mostly embraces its construction as assumed in the present study. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), after a vast analysis of scholarly and academic literature, posit that affective commitment is fostered primarily by an individual's involvement and identification with the organization/group. More specifically, they stressed that individuals become innately driven or involved in a course of action that emanates from an identification, association, and attachment with the larger organization or group's values and objectives.

Affectively committed group members are deemed to possess an awareness of identification and involvement that boost their participation in group activities, having

a readiness to strive towards achieving group goals and the continual urge to stay with the group (Meyer & Allen 1991; Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed peer cohesion, personal importance and equity as antecedents of affective commitment. These are qualities any group must display to command members' unalloyed dedication and allegiance towards group and obligation to achieve set goals.

The need for followers' or subordinates' affective commitment to group or organization cannot be overemphasized by academics and practitioners; hence continuous research is being encouraged. This is pertinent since affective commitment has been found to fluctuate given organizations' pecuniary unpredictability (Morrow, 2011). The rapid and swift modifications a group or organization goes through also affect commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). An organization's drive to achieve sustained globalization has also been shown to influence the affective commitment of members (Fornes, Rocco & Wollard, 2008). In addition, the rising organizational and/or group healthy rivalry and competition is a feature that determines the level of affective commitment (Cohen, 2007). Therefore, the focus of research should be to identify, and where possible, manipulate both group and individual factors that can slowdown the ease with which loyalty and dedication can be traded among members of groups and employees of organizations to guarantee commitment.

The essence and place of cohesion as regards affective commitment can be derived and deduced from the early works and postulations of Kanter (1968), who identified cohesion as one of the constructs that facilitate commitment and emotional attachment to social communities and organization. Among other things, Kanter believed that the ideal group has “*communion*”, which she labeled: “becoming part of the whole, the mingling of self with group” (p. 507). These descriptions reverberate and translated into and formed the basis for the contemporary academic and scholarly enquiry of affective commitment (Mercurio, 2015). It can therefore be posited that affective commitment among group members could be indicative of cohesion.

In respect to the present study, there is a recognition that the direct isolated relationship of ethical leadership and affective commitment is yet to be explored in a Nigerian population comprising of ASP police cadets. The need to establish the type of relationship existing between leaders’ ethical behaviour measures and what these engender in subordinates’ sense of belonging and identification with the group is paramount and germane to understanding social and group cohesion. The study is aimed at portraying whether leaders’ ethical behaviours can predict and hence, stimulate followers’ loyalty and motivation to commit to group and societal goals. It is noteworthy that by way of operational definition leaders’ ethical behaviour is synonymous with ethical leadership and therefore, the two terms have been used interchangeably in the study. The study therefore tested the hypothesis that:

ASP cadet leaders’ Ethical Behaviours will predict Subordinate ASP cadets’ Affective Commitment to squad.

Method

Design: In order to predict affective commitment from ethical leadership, the study used using a correlational design,

Population: The population for the study is Police cadets at the Nigeria Police Academy, Kano, Nigeria.

Sample: A sample of 252 subordinates ASP cadets was surveyed. The Mean Age is 22.7, Standard Deviation is 2.264, and Range is 12 years (17-29 years); Male cadet subordinates are 189(75%) and female cadet subordinates are 63(25%); 155(61.5%) are Christians, 89(35.3%) are Moslems, while those of other religions are 8(3.2%); those in Regular Course One are 96 (38.1%), Regular Course Two are 84(33.3%), Regular Course Three are 51(20.2%) and Regular Course Four are 21(8.3%).

Procedure: Cadet Leaders were requested to choose three (3) of their direct subordinates without being aware of what will be required of the subordinates. That is, leaders had no idea of what the subordinates were needed for. The subordinates responded to questionnaires rating their leader’s ethical leadership behaviours. After which the subordinate cadets were requested to rate the level of their affective commitment to their group (squad). Selected subordinates were assured of the confidentiality of their responses as the information gathered was be used only for research purposes. The completed questionnaires were subjected to

coding and data analysis using SPSS version 21.

Research Instruments and Psychometric Properties: Ethical leadership scale developed by Brown et al. (2005) was used. The questionnaire consist of 10 items rated 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) response format and evaluates ethical leadership of squad leaders, hall leaders, provost and class representatives as reported by subordinate cadets. It assesses the ethical leadership based on the perspectives of their subordinates and followers. Example of a scale item is: *My leader sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics*. Many studies on ethical leadership have reported a high reliability coefficient for the scale. Cronbach Alpha α for Ethical Leadership obtained in this particular study is =.892.

Affective Commitment Scale: This is a six items from Meyer and Allen (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Allen & Smith 1993) Organizational commitment scale. Researchers using the Affective Commitment Scale have reported that it forms a single factor with high reliability. Example of a scale item is: *I feel personally attached to my squad/class/hostel activities*; with five likert scale response pattern ranging from 1- (*strongly disagree*) to 5- (*strongly agree*). Cronbach Alpha α for Subordinates' Affective Commitment obtained in this particular study is = .907.

Methodological and Analytical Issues: Data gathered in this study can be said to be for two groups (subordinate cadets and leader cadets) but were collected from only one source (subordinate cadets rated the ethical

behaviours of leaders, after which they rated their own affective commitment to their squads). These data might be said to be at multi-levels, that is, data from subordinate cadets and leader cadets, but in order to run analyses on these data and assume same-level- data from subordinate cadets, certain statistical conditions must be met (e.g. see Chen and Hou 2016) - this procedure is the convention in ethical leadership empirical studies where multiple subordinates rated same leader.

Statistical techniques and analyses employed to test hypotheses when data are collected at multi-levels differ from those appropriate for data at same-level. The issue here is solely aimed at not violating the assumption of "independence of data" which is one among other assumptions needed for the conduct and use of parametric statistical techniques in testing hypotheses especially from same-level data. At multi-levels the assumption of independence of data is being violated. Therefore, multi-level statistical techniques are required to factor in the non-independence of data.

In order to confirm the appropriateness of using same-level or individual level rather than group-level perceptions of ethical leadership (ratings as provided by subordinate cadets) a number of analyses ought to be conducted. Since multiple subordinate cadets (in this case three) rated same cadet leader within a squad, we assessed if data can be aggregated at squad level or individual level (Bliese, 2000; Demaree & Wolf, 1984). To achieve this, it has been recommended that the intra-class correlations (ICC) and inter-rater agreement (r_{wg}) values for squad-level perceptions of

leader's ethical behaviours should be calculated (Bliese, 2000; Bliese, Halverson & Schriesheim, 2002; James, Demaree & Wolf, 1984).

Intra-class correlation one (ICC1) value shows the amount of variance in ethical leadership that can be accounted for by the cadet leader (that is for being a member of the group) and intra-class correlation two (ICC2) indicates the reliability of the ratings within each group. The inter-rater agreement or within-group agreement (r_{wg}) is the degree to which ratings from subordinate cadets are interchangeable. All these values should be small and below the cutoffs recommended to warrant same-level and not group-level analysis of data (Bliese, 1998).

The values obtained in this study for these three statistics are as follows: ICC1 = .176; ICC2 = .189; r_{wg} = .102. These values fall below the recommended cut-off scores

that will require aggregation of the ethical leadership scores into multi-levels (Bliese, 1998; LeBreton, & Senter, 2008). As it is, we can consider the ratings of ethical leadership by subordinates as independent of each other and thus, we will not be violating an important assumption by using statistics for same-level data to address and provide answer to our research hypothesis.

Result

The result of this study which examined the prediction of ASP subordinate cadets' affective commitment by ASP cadet leaders' ethical behaviours showed that affective commitment can be significantly predicted by ethical leadership. Table 1 display the results obtained after subordinate cadets' affective commitment was regressed on ethical leadership demonstrated by their leaders.

Table 1 shows relevant statistics obtained when subordinate cadets' rating of ethical leadership was independently used to predict subordinate cadets' affective commitment

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficient B</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Beta β</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
					<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
Constant	11.571	1.457		.000	8.702	14.440
Subordinate Cadets' Rating of Ethical Leadership	.307	.040	.436	.000	.250	.409
R^2	.216					
F-ratio	66.254					
Standard Error of the Estimate	5.019					

Durbin Watson Value = 1.779

The simple linear regression analysis used to test the ethical leadership predictive ability of affective commitment among ASP cadets showed a significant positive direction with ($\beta = .436$, 95% CI [.250, .409], $p = .0000$). The analysis further showed that the predictor variable- ethical leadership- explains 2.16% of the variance in the criterion variable- affective commitment ($R^2 = .216$, $F(1,251) = 66.254$, $p = .0000$).

Discussion

This study sought to determine whether the ethical leadership behaviours of ASP cadet leaders will bring about some level of affective commitment to the squads by ASP subordinate cadets. The findings show that this is highly probable. It will appear that for subordinates or followers to commit to and invest emotionally into group cause and objectives they will expect from their leaders good ethical conducts and qualities. Leaders demonstrate these lofty behaviours, and subordinates give in return their allegiance and emotional attachment to group. The social exchange theory can explain this relationship between ethical leadership and subordinate affective commitment.

Ethical behaviours by a leader comes at a personal cost: the leader must be perceived and seen as setting good example of group's ethics by followers; being able to conduct personal life in acceptable and ideal manner; demonstrate fairness and equity in decision making; and must be perceived as having the best interest of subordinate at heart. And these are rewarded by followers'

emotional bond and a sense of devotion to group. More so, authentic leadership which shares a moral dimension with ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006) has been found to engender affective trust and affective commitment from followers (Xiong, Lin, Li, & Wang, 2016; Hidayat, 2016). These findings are in consonant with the result of this study.

In addition, as indicated by Riggio (2013) leaders' have their in-group subordinates (squad members and unit members) and establish quality interactions even as facilitated by their ethical behaviours towards direct subordinates most time while there is less quality interactions with outgroup subordinates. These differential interactions depict the leader-follower exchange (LMX) theory which suggests that the quality of interaction between the leader and particular group members determines effective leadership and affects subordinates' group loyalty and other group behaviours (Kim, Lee & Carlson, 2010). These positions are reflected in the result obtained from this study, as subordinates were apt to show affective commitment given perceptions of ethical leadership which involves leaders close interaction with subordinates.

Walumbwa et al., (2011), demonstrated that the quality of leader-member exchange and group identification (a component of affective commitment) are potential mediators of relationships between ethical leadership behaviours and desirable group members' behaviour. This point to the intricate dynamics of ethical leadership behaviours and subordinates' affective

commitment of which this research successfully and singularly associated. The result showed a positive relationship between the ethical behaviours portrayed by a leader and followers affective emotional commitment to group goals. Somewhat, the result of this study is similar and can be likened to the finding of Ramachandra and Krishnan (2009) which showed the moral dimension (its ethical element) of transformational leadership to be positively related to both affective and normative commitments.

Meyer et al. (2002) identified withdrawal as a potential consequence of low affective commitment; conversely, the discretionary behaviour of a group member to put in extra effort in achieving group goals without formal recognition or reward (Organ, 1997) has been found to be positively related to affective commitment (Liu, 2009). This shows that subordinates can and do go the extra mile when they are affectionately committed to group interests; it is also very likely that the ethical conducts demonstrated by those they look up to further guarantee this passion.

Although, any study that adopts a correlational design is to some extent limited in its conclusion as regards what variable is responsible for the other, more advance research design and statistical techniques are becoming accessible to estimate probable causal paths of relationships. In addition, subsequent studies should explicitly demonstrate the role cohesion (social or group) play in the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment.

Is it an antecedence or consequence of this interplay; does it mediate and/or moderate this established relationship? Answers to such research questions will give direction to which of these factors is to be given much priority in the drive to foster better and desirable leader-follower dynamic that leads ultimately to our national development.

In conclusion, when an individual provides leadership in ethical manners by finding and discharging responsibilities the right ways and conducting personal life in a moral and principled style, followers develop a strong sense of belonging and become personally attached to group goals. Ethical leaders also listen to subordinates and teach ethical standards. These leaders serve as exemplars and reward subordinates who emulate and practices this set of behaviours and disciplines those who violate same. They have earned the trust of their subordinates who in turn take pride in their contributions to the group. The ethical behaviours exhibited by a leader are germane to members committing passionately to group processes. The positive dynamics of this leader-follower relationship is a sine qua non for sustained national identification and social cohesion which brings about national development. Therefore, it is being recommended that the selection and electioneering processes ushering in individuals into both private and public leadership positions should be fashioned in such a way to produce and promote the display of ethical conducts and behaviours.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship and publication of this article which is solely for academic and research purposes.

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