

Meaningfulness and Employee Innovative Behaviour in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to figure out what kind of link there was between Meaningfulness, a psychological empowerment characteristic, and employee innovative behaviour. The study was done in the telecommunications industry, which is a big business in Nigeria's south-south area. It used a lot of questionnaires to get the information it needed. Using metrics like idea generation, idea development, and idea implementation, the researchers were able to measure how creative each employee was. They were chosen from a pool of 310 people in the telecommunications industry. The data was looked at both descriptively and inferentially. We used the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) in the descriptive analysis, while regression analysis and the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) were used in the inferential analysis. Based on what the research said, meaningfulness had a mild positive relationship on idea formation and development. However, it also had a high and significant effect on how the concept was put into practice. Thus, the data showed, among other things, that meaningfulness is important when it comes to certain tasks, and it also plays a big role in the collective action that positions businesses in their industry.

Keywords: Employee Innovative Behavior, Idea Development, Idea Generation and Idea Implementation, Meaningfulness, Psychological Empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, there is rising complexity linked to the corporate environment, which has made the role of managing businesses increasingly tough. Importantly, increased competitiveness as a consequence of new technology, changes in customer tastes, and the emergence of new markets has altered the way business' function (Lee & Koh, 2000; Spreitzer, 2003; Robert, 2006). This is true not only for organisations in affluent nations, but also for those in emerging countries like Nigeria. Nigerian firms may not be successful in the global competitive climate unless they can break through established business patterns, build autonomous inventive capabilities, and finally compete on quantity and quality at the same time. To investigate how Nigerians promote innovations, we must first determine how to increase individual innovativeness, because organisational innovation is a result of individuals' innovative behaviour.

Empowerment, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), is a process in which situations that create powerlessness are recognised and remedied by delivering efficacy knowledge, hence increasing an employee's self-efficacy. Psychological empowerment, according to Spreitzer (1995), is an individual's perception of intrinsic motivation that is founded on cognitions about oneself or herself in connection to his or her professional position. These cognitions are linked to the psychological states defined by Hackman and Oldham (1990) and Kahn (1990) as having an influence on employees' intrinsic motivation. According to Wong (2006) and

Tamunosiki-Amadi and Ogoun (2018), it is reasonable to believe that workers will be more imaginative in their work if they work in an empowering environment that encourages a fit between their aspirations and their working conditions.

In spite of extensive research into the effects of intrinsic motivation on a variety of outcomes, including task performance (Chen & Klimoski, 2003; Grant, 2008), work attitudes (Avolio, *et al.*, 2004; Liden, Wayne & Sparrow, 2000), and organisational citizenship behaviours (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006), there has been surprisingly little research into the relationship between meaningfulness and employee innovative behaviour in Nigerian workplaces. Thus, this study is designed to fill the void left by this research.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Meaningfulness

Because psychological empowerment involves individual psychological cognition and experience, the definition of empowerment must vary depending on the person and context. Psychological empowerment, also known as organic or bottom-up processing, holds that empowerment occurs only when psychological conditions establish an employee's impression of empowerment. Scholars have researched psychological attributive factors from many perspectives (Matthews *et al.*, 2003). According to previous relative empirical research, the factors influencing individual psychological empowerment include three aspects: individual factors such as population statistical variables, personal

character, and interpretive style; work factors such as work autonomy, task feedback, and team and organizational factors such as team validity, social structural characteristics of the unity, and leader behavior; and factors of team and organization (Ling & Lu 2007).

Empowered people understand the purpose of their occupations and meaning acts as the “engine” that motivates them to accomplish something meaningful (Sprietzer *et al.*, 1997). They are stimulated even more when they perceive that their efforts will have an impact and contribute to the achievement of group goals. Employees who are empowered have been shown to be more proactive in changing and influencing their work environment, according to Sprietzer *et al.* (1997). As a result, Tamunosiki-Amadi and Dede (2015) predict empowerment to be favorably associated with inventive solutions to the work environment.

If you are motivated to do something because you love it, it is called intrinsic task motivation. Rather than depending on automatic answers, people motivated by this form of inspiration are more likely to pay attention and stay focused on the work at hand (Amabile, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 2006).

Motivated personnel tend to be more inquisitive and adaptable in their thinking as well as more committed to the company's long-term goals and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou, 2003). As a result of this research, it has been shown that people who feel genuinely driven at work are more likely to seek information, open their minds to new ideas, and adopt unconventional methods of decision-making when faced with barriers (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley, 1995). People who are self-motivated are more likely to seek out new experiences and take on new tasks (George, 2007; Zhou, 1998).

B. Employee Innovative Behavior

Ideas are generated and implemented by innovating. However, it is crucial to remember that creativity and innovation are frequently conflated (Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996). While some argue that creativity is the production of new ideas and innovation is the application of those ideas (West & Farr, 1990). Oldham and Cummings (1996), for example, hold that creativity is a personal trait, whereas innovation is an organisational one. But the most frequently recognised perspective is that creativity is the production of ideas, whereas innovation is the generation of ideas and their execution (e.g., Kanter, 1983; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Unsworth, 1999).

It is possible to describe creativity in terms of the generation of new ideas (Amabile, 1983; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). The acceptance, creation, and application of new and valuable ideas are all part of innovative behaviour (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Workplace innovation encompasses acts such as searching out new ideas, advocating ideas and collecting funds/planning for the execution of ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994). This style of conduct takes greater risk and out-of-the-box thinking, and it is less concerned with conformity and conforming to the norm.

C. Meaningfulness and Employee Innovative Behavior

As stated by Velthouse, (2000) the worth of a work aims, or purpose is measured against a person's own criteria of value, the inherent concern of an individual for a certain

activity. A job role's responsibilities must be aligned with a person's views, values, and actions in order to be meaningful (Oldham & Heckman, 1980). Empowerment's “engine” is characterized as meaningfulness, which energizes people to work (Sprietzer & Kisilos 1997). Meaningfulness, according to Pratt and Ashforth (2003), is defined as the belief that one's work has value and purpose. A work objective or purpose's 'value in respect to an individual's own' might be characterized as 'meaningful' in this sense (May *et al.*, 2004). A sense of purpose is derived from the belief that one's work contributes to the greater good. In order for people to be able to express themselves, they will look for jobs that enable them to do so. More meaningful work experiences should be linked to job duties and activities that match with an individual's self-concept. Employees who feel empowered are more likely to see their work as a source of fulfillment (Avolio and Bhatia, 2004). As a means of increasing an employee's enthusiasm for and commitment to their job, restoring meaning to their work has become popular. Many psychologists and sociologists believe that humans may find significance in virtually any work or group of people (Ashforth & Kreitner, 1999; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Wizesniewski, 2003). This may have something to do with the fact that meaning is subjective (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Examples of meaningfulness include helping one's family, making a positive effect on the company and showing one's personality at work. Wezesniewski (2003), on the other hand, contends that employees themselves determine the significance of their job.

For example, Hackman and Oldham's (1980) work characteristic model includes a psychological state called meaningfulness, which is similar to this. In psychoanalytic words, meaningfulness is a form of cathexis or psychological investment (Kanter, 2003). Meaningfulness is measured at the task or project level within the empowerment framework. As a result, meaningfulness is referred regarded as the “engine” of empowerment since it motivates workers, resulting in more inventive behavior.

A sense of purpose is derived from the belief that one's work contributes to the greater good. The term “meaningfulness” can apply to a worker's perception of the importance, value, and merit of his or her work. As creative and self-expressive beings, people naturally gravitate toward positions that allow them to act in ways that are consistent with their self-perceptions. Fitting professional demands with one's own values, beliefs, and behaviors is an important part of this process (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). People who work in jobs that match their self-conceptions are more likely to have meaningful work experiences that may lead to new ideas. Employees who feel empowered are more likely to see their work as a source of fulfilment (Avolio *et al.*, 2004).

Employee idea generation may benefit from empowerment, according to existing studies. Employees with strong intrinsic task motivation (associated with the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment) were shown to be more inventive by Redmond *et al.* (1993), for example. Individuals' perceptions of their work environment, according to Amabile *et al.* (1996), are a key determinant of their ability to be innovative. According to their hypothesis, the psychological significance workers attach to events in

their businesses affects their drive to come up with new ideas in organizations.

A prerequisite to employee empowerment is that their work is relevant and vital, and they feel sufficient in it. This application is a fundamental component of creativity that is the primary source of employee innovation. According to Redmond *et al.* (2003), employees are more likely to participate in creative work processes when their personal vision and goals are aligned with those of the company.

According to Bowen and Lawler (1992), one of the benefits of empowering workers is that they will feel better about their employment and about themselves if you enable them to make the decisions; they will "feel ownership" of the job and find it valuable. A favorable outcome can be predicted if employees perceive their job to be meaningful, personally significant, or if they are pursuing a fundamental goal. Psychological factors, such as psychological meaningfulness, have been proven to motivate employees to engage in creative activity, according to Vinarskiperetz and Carmeli (2002). Based on the current state of debate on the construct relationship, the following is our working hypotheses:

- H₀₁*: There is no significant relationship between meaningfulness and idea generation.
- H₀₂*: There is no significant relationship between meaningfulness and idea development.
- H₀₃*: There is no significant relationship between meaningfulness and idea implementation.

III. METHODOLOGY

Nigerian telecom workers in the South-South area were surveyed for information. The survey was carried out in a cross-sectional fashion. The participants in the study are Nigerians who work in the telecommunications industry. The six state capitals of the South-South area served as our accessible population for our research. The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) lists all registered companies, and the researcher focused on six key service providers from the list. The formal function of the telecommunications company served as a proxy for the actual population size. A total of 1,500 and a half employees constituted the overall population. The study's sample size was calculated using a table devised by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). It took us three hundred and ten people to do the study. There were 209 completed and useable copies of our questionnaire when it was given, representing 67.41% of those who participated honestly in our study. Questionnaires served as the primary means of gathering information for this study. There were two components to the survey. Section A includes data on a person's age, gender, marital status, and degree of education. During Section B, the responder was asked to describe the research variables. Respondents were

asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a statement or set of statements using the Likert Scale rating, which used a 5-point scale. The meaningfulness scale was adapted for this study (Kirman & Rosen 1997; Sprietzer, 1995). The Innovative Behaviour questionnaire (IBQ) developed by Bruce (2001) and Amabile (2002) was used to gauge employee creativity. Using the EIBQ, we were able to track the generation, development, and implementation of new ideas. The factors that were utilised in this study were taken from previously published research and evaluated and verified in other investigations (Sprietzer, 1995; Kirman & Rosen, 1997; Bruce, 2001; Amabile, 2002). In other words, they were constructed legitimate. Our study relied on Cronbach Alpha to measure dependability. Cronbach's alpha is a well-known research tool for determining whether or not a system's internal consistency is reliable. It is commonly acknowledged that an alpha coefficient of 0.80 is an acceptable degree of internal dependability of the instrument, however, an alpha level of 0.7 is also regarded to be efficient. Our scales' Cronbach Alpha Coefficients were meaningfulness (0.775) and innovativeness (0.775), indicating their trustworthiness (0.792). Thus, all of our variables were internally reliable.

Our demographic data were classified using frequency and percentages. We used both univariate and bivariate analysis to examine the relationships between the variables we studied. Inferential statistics based on the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient were utilised to demonstrate a link between Employee Meaningfulness and Innovation.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Using frequency and percentages, we categorised our demographic data. It is clear from our demographic data that 47 (22.5%) of the survey participants hold at least a National Certificate of Education/National Diploma (NCE). The next category, HND/B.Sc/BA, had 67 (32.1%) of the respondents, while the Master's degree level had 83 (30.7%) of the sample. A total of 12 respondents (5.7%) held a PhD, the highest degree of education available. Only 53.1% of the respondents were male telecom workers, while the remaining 46.9% of respondents were female. There were 111 people who answered the survey in the top echelons of the organisations, or 63.6% of the total sample. A total of 51 people (24.4%) working in middle management and 25 people (12%) working at the top management level were polled for this study. This demonstrates that the bulk of Nigeria's telecommunications workers are well-educated. Univariate analysis provided us with the following mean scores for each variable. This information was provided in the Tables I-IV. Employee Innovative Behaviour (EIB) had nine elements on the scale, whereas Meaningfulness (MNG) had five.

TABLE I: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF MEANINGFULNESS

		MNG 1	MNG 2	MNG 3	MNG 4	MNG 5
N	Valid	209	209	209	209	209
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.98	3.91	3.01	3.23	3.94
Std Dev		0.153	0.502	0.069	0.422	0.341
Skewness		-1.872	-1.064	-1.413	-0.669	-0.443
Std Error of skewness		0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143
Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Source: SPSS Computation.

We used both univariate and bivariate analysis to examine the relationships between the variables we studied. Employee Innovative Behaviour and Meaningfulness have been linked using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient in an inferential study. The responses for meaningfulness as shown in the Table I above are assertive. The five items have interesting mean scores that are indicative of the degree of meaningful. The mean score on the first item is very high one of 3.98 which implies employees concern for input. The second item had a mean score of 3.91 which is also very high on the scale. It also means that employee will be willing to make their input and give support if they are to be considered during attempts at reaching decisions. In the case of the third item, the respondents make meaning out of their task because their competitiveness is owed to their assigned tasks. This has a means score of 3.01. For the fourth and fifth item, they have 3.23 and 3.94 as their mean scores respectively. The values have shown sufficiently high on the scale. These infer that respondent's function along the line of acquired skills and this makes the job meaningful. Again, they are willing to think and be innovative enough, if the outcomes are used in setting targets and reaching goals. In all, the response distribution here infers that where employee sees their roles, as being meaningful, it will help to optimize their input and attract commitment.

TABLE II: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF IDEA GENERATION (EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR) SURVEY

		IG 1	IG 2
N	Valid	209	209
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.00	3.29
Std Deviation		0.00	0.456
Skewness		-0.320	-0.611
Std Error of skewness		0.143	0.143
Minimum		0.00	0.00
Maximum		4.00	4.00

Source: SPSS COMPUTATION.

We have also measured idea generation in Table II with two question items in the instrument. The item one strongly implies that the respondents are happy whenever their new ways are applied and helps in adding value to the final outcomes. This shows a high mean score of 3.00. The second item had a very high mean value of 3.29 which indicates that there is a deliberate organizational attempt to enrich their skills so as to be able to generate ideas for optimal functioning.

TABLE III: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF IDEA DEVELOPMENT (EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR) SURVEY

		ID 1	ID 2
N	Valid	209	209
	Missing	0	0
Mean		2.97	2.93
Std Deviation		0.167	0.361
Skewness		-0.424	-0.967
Std Error of skewness		-0.424	-0.967
Minimum		0.00	0.00
Maximum		4.00	4.00

Source: SPSS COMPUTATION.

Idea development is measured with two items. In response to item one, the mean score was as high as 2.97 on the scale. This shows that the respondents are interested in developing ideas because they are considered for attaining the goals of

the organizations. Similarly, the second question item had a high mean score of 2.93 which simply means that the respondents are encouraged to be creative and develop new ideas since they are at liberty to do so in the organization.

TABLE IV: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF IDEA IMPLEMENTATION (EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR) SURVEY

		IDI 1	IDI 2	IDI 3	IDI 4	IDI 5
N	Valid	209	209	209	209	209
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.00	3.94	3.88	3.65	2.67
Std Dev		0.00	0.341	0.672	0.535	1.389
Skewness		-1.982	-0.778	0.391	-0.914	-1.146
Std Error of skewness		0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143
Minimum		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Maximum		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Source: SPSS COMPUTATION.

Table IV showed the first item on the idea implementation scale had an overwhelming mean score of 4.00 and it shows that inputs toward successful implementation of new work ideas are entertained. The second item has a mean score of 3.9 which is also very high. It indicates that idea generators are part of the implementation thereby making it successful. In same vein, the company follows through the implementation process to be able to achieve goal. This is expressed in the third item with 3.88 as the mean score. The fourth question item has a mean score of 3.65 which also indicates that available skills have helped in ensuring successful implementation of new ideas. The fifth item had a mean score of 2.16 which implies that respondents' views are considered in implementation new ideas.

TABLE V: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MEANINGFULNESS AND EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR

	Ho ₁	Ho ₂	Ho ₃
	M (IG)	M (ID)	M (IM)
N	209	209	209
Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Rho	0.262**	0.379**	0.428**

** Correlation is significant @ 0.01 Level (2-tailed).

From the results in Table V, there is a weak positive relationship between meaningfulness and idea generation, with $r = 0.262$ ($P < 0.01$) although the relationship is shown to be significant. This was also the case for meaningfulness and idea development with r value = 0.379. In the case of idea implementation, the result which is 0.428 at $p < 0.01$ was strong and significant at that level. In all, the outcomes as expressed shows that meaningfulness correlates with employee innovative behaviour as measured in the study and although it is a weak positive relationship they are significantly correlated. This means that the null hypotheses as stated are rejected.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Meaningfulness has a Weak but Significant Relationship with EIB.

There is obvious bulk of scholarly effort to critically examine the concept of empowerment at work. This is done with a view to finding out all the cognitive elements that are though not physically observed, are capable of stimulating

certain behaviour amongst employees. Meaningfulness is the value of a work goal or purpose judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards. Velthouse (2000) maintained that meaning represents the value ascribed to each work task or goal by the individual worker in relation to his innate definition of this expectation.

In this vein, the meaning component of empowerment astutely describes the fact that a less value task or goal from the individual worker's perspective may necessarily be given less attention or effort. An intrinsic positive assessment of tasks or goals may propel desired action towards the accomplishment of goals. The findings of the study agree with Haran, (2004) work on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction through the meaningfulness relationship as expressed by Haran's work is an increased expression of the behavioural perspective in relation with handling assigned tasks, it connotes the importance of the value-oriented commitment that is attracted when tasks are assigned. Importantly, the empowerment discourse has centrally located meaningfulness as core in the employee quest for increased involvement and motivation in all workplace actions. The descriptive outcomes of the study are quite emphatic on the employees' expression on meaningfulness. It simply implies that in the telecommunication sector tasks which are cognitively described as reminiscing value attracts commitment on their part. In linking this thought with innovative practices which literature on organizational development consider strategic, it becomes clear while the inferential outcomes express an association between meaningfulness and innovative behaviour. Innovation as it were, is a phenomenal workplace action aimed at gaining competitive advantage therefore it is a value-oriented action that should prompt employee willingness and readiness to participate in all assigned tasks that guarantee innovativeness and successful implementation. Works on meaningfulness and creativeness have shown that the empowerment construct though expansive, reinforces organizational effort at giving meaning to development of new ideas that are capable of enhancing overall performance (Rappaport, 1997; Kizilos & Nanson, 2004). Kellough and Nigro (2003)' findings also support the findings of our study. Though their works were carried out amongst political appointees with a view to determining what prompts their introduction of novel ideas as a means of promoting value-added governance. From the empirical results, the valued assignment of enhancing standard of living for the citizenry was a motivation for innovative practice. The replication of this study outcome by the authors on frontline employees of the aviation sector also showed the need for valued tasks and purpose which meaningfulness represents.

Our study result showed that the employees of the telecommunication sector like others consider the fact that assigned tasks have a significant contribution on the cumulative action that position the firms within the sector. We have noted a strong theoretical concurrence which points to the fact that employee empowerment which correlates with the creative potency of the work force has meaningfulness as a latent factor which is an intrinsic motivational element in relation to psychological perspective of empowerment. This simply means that employee requires a high sense of ascribing value to the assigned tasks and intended goals.

Consequently, such value attachment to intended goals and tasks is a primary reason that instigates innovative behaviour in terms of idea generation, development and implementation. Exceedingly, the implementation aspect of innovative practices is further facilitated by the value oriented strategic actions that are themselves innovative to successfully carry through the entire implementation process.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions drawn from our study are that:

1. Essentially, it is drawn from the study outcome that a psychologically empowered workforce is an incentive for promoting innovative practices.
2. It was demonstrated that the workforce's spectacular intrinsic experience in connection to the amount to which their job activities are regarded significant and strategic to the overall goals of the business is a major determinant for their commitment to work goals and inventive abilities.
3. Employee's willingness to be part of organizational success story is well spelt therefore managers of organization should unambiguously define roles and assigned tasks. This will enable them to know when their input is considered meaningful to the overall goals. Clearly stated and assigned tasks prompts employee commitment especially when it constitutes the basis for the assessment of his input and reward.
4. The study sample is from a single industry in Nigeria, further studies will benefit from examining the above relationship in other sectors such as Health and Education.

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