

**ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST, ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT
AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION, UGANDA**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between organizational trust, ethical leadership, organizational commitment and employee engagement within The Electoral Commission Uganda. The study used a cross-sectional research design along with a quantitative research approach. Primary data was collected from 182 respondents 72% of the targeted 254 sample. Data was obtained using structured questionnaire which was tested for validity using expert judgment and CVI, and reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data was analyzed using SPSS. V. 25 thereafter obtaining frequency table and inferential statistics for addressing study objectives.

The study found a positive relationship between organizational trust and employee engagement are positively related. Likewise, it was found that ethical leadership and employee engagement are positively associated. There was a positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee engagement. The study found that the significant predictors of employee engagement were ethical leadership and organizational commitment unlike organizational trust. Moreover, organizational commitment was the better predictor of employee engagement. This study concludes that ethical leadership and organizational commitment are vital in addressing issues of employee disengagement. More so, this study attests that human resource managers need to focus greatly towards implementing practices and procedures which are directed towards stimulating organizational commitment for to build a more engaged team. The study recommends; affective commitment; normative commitment; fair treatment; and ethical standards to stimulate employee engagement.

Key words: organizational trust, ethical leadership, organizational commitment and employee engagement

Background to the Study

Employee engagement is one of the focal points for human resource managers (Yulianti, 2016). Every organization is interested in having a workforce that is inspired, self-motivated and most importantly, a workforce that can go an extra mile whenever they are executing tasks and obligations (Consiglio, Borgogni, Di-Tecco & Schaufeli, 2016). For that reason, employee engagement is unequivocally considered a great deal of interest in almost all human resource management facets we know hitherto (Aktar, 2016). Only 24% of employee are fully engaged while 39% are relatively engaged. In Africa, engagement declined from 62% in 2015 to 59% in 2016 (Hewitt, 2016). Moreover, Sub Saharan Africa which reported the highest engaged employees between 2012 and 2013, by close of 2017, the region recorded the lowest number of engaged employees (Hewitt, 2017).

Uganda is not an exception either, especially when it comes to government agencies. A case in point is The Electoral Commission Uganda (Electoral Commission Performance Appraisal Report, 2017). The agency was set up under Article 60 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda with a mandate including among others; ensure that regular, free and fair elections are held; organize, conduct and supervise elections and referenda; and demarcate constituencies. For the last 3 consecutive years, employees have failed to fulfill their interim objectives. In 2014, 32 of the 59 of appraised employees were rated unsatisfactory performers. Over 72% of employees reported late within the year of which only 12.5% percent gave explanation to immediate supervisors (Electoral Commission Human Resource Report, 2014). Five employees were terminated for failing to meet targets in the tallying center. In 2016, the human resource report indicated that 25% are not dedicated while 46% are actively searching

new employment opportunities (Electoral Commission Satisfaction Survey Report, 2016). Against this backdrop, this study is justified to investigate the relationship between organizational trust, ethical leadership, organizational commitment and employee engagement while focusing on a single entity for a more in-depth understanding of the subject.

Statement of the Problem

The rate of employee engagement has consistently declined within the Electoral Commission over the last 5 years which is manifested in the low vigor, dedication and absorption of employees (Electoral Commission Performance Appraisal Report, 2017). More than half 54.2% of employees are unable to meet targets and the rate of absenteeism without explanation stands at 69.1%. In addition, at least 13.5% of employees turned down promotion opportunities to avoid challenging tasks and responsibilities while the number of employees who have resigned their positions has increased by over 7.2% between 2014 and 2018 (Electoral Commission HR Exit Report, 2018). It could be likely that low engagement of employees in Electoral commission may be attributed to inadequate organizational trust, ethical leadership and organizational commitment.

Research Objectives

- 1. To examine the relationship between organizational trust and employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda*
- 2. To examine the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda*
- 3. To assess the relationship between organizational commitment and employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda*
- 4. To examine the degree of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables*

Research Questions

1. *What is the relationship between organizational trust and employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda?*
2. *What is the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda?*
3. *What is the degree of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables?*
4. *What is the joint effect of organizational trust, ethical leadership and organizational commitment on employee engagement within the Electoral Commission Uganda?*

Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a cross-sectional research design along with a quantitative research approach. The cross-sectional research design was selected to facilitate data collection within a short time. This would enable the researcher to address the phenomenon under investigation as fast as possible. In addition, cross-sectional research design is generally less costly and time saving allowing fast conclusions and recommendations (Field, 2009). The quantitative research approach was selected for simplicity and clarity of expressing the cause-and-effect relationship between studied variables.

Study Population

The study constituted 750 employees spread across 118 Electoral commission offices in Uganda (Electoral Commission Human Resource Report, 2018).

Sample size and Selection technique

A sample size of 254 employees was determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used. These employees constituted operational officers, drivers and middle managers who served as the unit of inquiry and unit of analysis. To obtain these employees, stratified random sampling was applied. Employees were categorized according to the three categories to form the study strata. Based on the number of

employees from each stratum, the researcher proportionately determined the number of employees to be selected from each category before applying simple random sampling where employees were picked randomly without replacing.

Data Analysis

From the field, data was sorted, edited and analyzed using the SPSS. v. 25 for analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). The researcher carried out parametric test's normality, factor analysis, mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, scatter plot among others to ensure data cleanliness. Thereafter, the researcher obtained a frequency table for demographic characteristics, interpretation of which was based on percent values. To address objectives of the study, the study used inferential statistics of correlation analysis and regression. Pearson Correlation analysis was used herein to examine the nature of the relationship between variables (positive or negative) and whether the relationship is significant or not. Regression analysis was used to examine the predictability of variables in explaining variances in the dependent variable

RESULTS

Table 1: Pearson correlation Analysis

Variables/Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Organizational Trust (1)	1							
<i>Emotional Trust (2)</i>	.592**	1						
<i>Cognitive Trust (3)</i>	.786**	.417**	1					
Ethical Leadership (4)	.689**	.487**	.466**	1				
<i>Ethical Standards (5)</i>	.381**	.417**	.179*	.715**	1			
<i>Fair Treatment (6)</i>	.697**	.350**	.489**	.727**	.426**	1		
Organizational Commitment (7)	.731**	.410**	.478**	.758**	.539**	.664**	1	
<i>Normative Commitment (8)</i>	.504**	.384**	.397**	.467**	.304**	.387**	.655**	1
<i>Affective Commitment (9)</i>	.575**	.387**	.374**	.672**	.488**	.555**	.743**	.334**
Employee Engagement (10)	.611**	.405**	.400**	.713**	.487**	.619**	.734**	.485**

Notes: n=182, *. $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). **. $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data

Organizational trust and employee engagement

Table 1 indicates a significant positive relationship between organizational trust and employee engagement ($r = .611$, $p < 0.01$). The results portray that enhancing organizational trust would be associated with improved employee engagement. Worth noting, organizational trust contains constructs of emotional trust and cognitive trust. The obtained results indicate a significant positive relationship between emotional trust and employee engagement ($r = .405$, $p < 0.01$). The results further indicate a significant positive relationship between cognitive trust and employee engagement ($r = .400$, $p < 0.01$). These statistics signify that stimulating emotional trust and cognitive trust would subsequently enhance employee engagement levels.

Ethical leadership and employee engagement

Correlation results presented in Table 1 indicate a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement ($r = .713$, $p < .01$). The implication

of this result is when ethical leadership is enhanced, it would result in enhancement in employee engagement. In addition, the results obtained those ethical standards, as one of the subcomponents of ethical leadership is significantly positively related with employee engagement ($r=.487$, $p<.01$). This result implies that enhancing ethical standards stimulates employee engagement. Further, the results obtained a significant positive relationship between fair treatment and employee engagement with ($r=.619$, $p<.01$). This means that fair treatment enhances employee engagement.

Organizational commitment and employee engagement

Table 1 reveals that there exists a significant positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee engagement ($r=.734$, $p<0.01$). the results imply that improvement in organizational commitment is associated with improvement in employee engagement. More so, the results obtained a significant positive relationship between normative commitment and employee engagement ($r=.485$, $p<0.01$). This means that employees are more likely to become engaged when they are normatively committed. Likewise, the correlation statistics indicate a significant positive relationship between affective commitment and employee engagement ($r=.630$, $p<0.01$). The implication of this result is that improvement in affective commitment results is likely to enhance employee engagement.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was used to examine the predictive power of variables (organizational trust, ethical leadership, organizational commitment) in explaining variances in the dependent variable (employee engagement). The model was also used to identify the variables which significantly predict the dependent variable ($p<.05$) and to rank among the variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis for studied variables

		<i>Unstandardized</i>		<i>Standardized</i>		
		<i>Coefficients</i>		<i>Coefficients</i>		
		<i>Std.</i>				
<i>Model</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>
1	<i>(Constant)</i>	0.335	0.191		1.754	0.081
	<i>Organizational Trust</i>	0.066	0.082	0.059	0.805	0.422
	<i>Ethical Leadership</i>	0.341	0.074	0.350	4.583	0.000
	<i>Organizational Commitment</i>	0.438	0.083	0.426	5.241	0.000
		<i>R</i>		<i>Adjusted R</i>		
		<i>R</i>	<i>Square</i>	<i>Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		.773 ^a	0.598	0.591	88.274	.000 ^b

Notes: $n=182$, Durbin-Watson=1.979, Dep. Var: Employee Engagement

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reveals $F=88.274$, $Sig.=.000$ in relation to the analyzed variables of organizational commitment, ethical leadership, organizational trust and employee engagement. The results confirm a statistically significant predictability of the variables in explaining variations in the dependent variable. Hence, the regression model is fit to be based upon to make conclusions and recommendations.

Results indicate that organizational trust, organizational commitment and ethical leadership predict up to 59.1% of the variances in employee engagement ($Adj\ r^2=.591$). Furthermore, the statistics show that organizational trust is not a significant predictor of employee engagement ($Beta=.059$, $t=805$, $p>.05$). On the other hand, the study obtained standardized coefficients of $Beta=.350$, $t=4.583$, $p<.05$ in relation to ethical

leadership. These results signify that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of employee engagement. Likewise, the results indicate $Beta=.426$, $t=5.241$, $p<.05$ in regard to organizational commitment. The results imply that organizational commitment is a significant predictor of employee engagement. Overall, the results indicate that ethical leadership and organizational commitment unlike organizational trust significantly predict positive variations in employee engagement. Results indicate that a unit change in organizational commitment significantly explains about 42.6% positive variations in employee engagement ($Beta=.426$) while ethical leadership predicts about 35% ($Beta=.350$). In this regard, the statistics indicate that organizational commitment predicts more variations in employee engagement compared to ethical leadership.

Conclusion

It is established herein that improving organizational trust increases the likelihood of getting employees more committed. Hence, enhancing cognitive and emotional trust will stimulate affective and normative commitment. It is also noted that ethical leadership facilitates employee commitment. This communicates the need for organizations to alleviate ethical leadership to enhance commitment. More so, it is unearthed that as organizational trust is enhanced, so does it drive employees' engagement. Based on this fact, it is of great importance to express trust towards employees for a potential team that is full of vigor, dedication and absorption. Worth to note,

Recommendations

Management should affective commitment among employees in order to ensure employee commitment. This can be achieved when employees are rendered with additional tasks and responsibilities, delegated with responsibilities which will prompt them to work aggressively and with a lot of determination.

Normative commitment should be promoted within Electoral Commission Uganda. The human resource team must ensure that they revise employee remunerations and benefits which will prompt employees to work more. Such remunerations should be performance based and a clear policy for benefits such as promotion should be availed to employees such that they know the outcomes of their effort towards the organization.

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