



Keywords

Cynicism,
Organisational Cynicism,
Intention to Quit

Received: November 1, 2017

Accepted: November 23, 2017

Published: January 11, 2018

Organisational Cynicism and Employees' Intention to Quit

Batholomew Peter^{*}, Onuoha Benedict Chima

Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email address

peterb280@yahoo.com (B. Peter)

^{*}Corresponding author

Citation

Batholomew Peter, Onuoha Benedict Chima. Organisational Cynicism and Employees' Intention to Quit. *International Journal of Management Science*. Vol. 5, No. 1, 2018, pp. 6-9.

Abstract

In this 21st century, the enormous impact of globalisation, competition, workforce diversity, and advancement in technology has really changed things. Life today is totally different from as it was yesterday, and today, people have more job opportunities compared to yesterday! This era's Managers and Leaders have as a very big challenge, the task to retain the best employees. This paper sought to carry-out a critical and an unbiased theoretical study and examination into the relationship between organisational cynicism and employees' intention to quit such an organisation. Descriptive Research Method was adopted for the study. And data was sourced from basically secondary sources. On the basis of the data sourced, studied, and examined, the researchers found that Cynicism among other things, can make employees become hopeless, less committed to their work, less satisfied, and at the end, the employees may decide to quit the organisation. And based on these findings, it was concluded among other things that, in most cases, there is a positive and direct relationship between both variables (Organisational Cynicism and Employees' Intention to Quit) of the study. As a result, this study posited that, the higher the cynicism in an organisation, the higher the employees' intention to quit such an organisation, and vice versa. And hence, it was recommended among others that, Cynicism can effectively be managed by the organisations by adopting fair practices like operating in an open and honest atmosphere, providing realistic goals, promoting cooperation among/between individuals and management, and honest and fair pay system. These, in the researchers' opinion, can improve the confidence of the employees; and downplay any form of organisational Cynicism.

1. Introduction

Researchers have suggested that organisational cynicism is increasing among employees. In fact, this is taking an alarming proportion! And according to Scott & Zweig (2008) the realities of organisational life are changing; as individuals no longer expect to be employed by one organisation for their entire working lives. Also, according to McClelland (1961), this is especially common among those workers with high need for achievement (n-Ach.), because their need for achievement is consistent. Also, in the views of Cole (2004), Hassan (2009), Robbins (1993), and Robbins, Judge, & Vohra (2012) employees can develop the intention to quit their job whenever they start having negative feelings about the organisation based on their perceived unequal treatment from the organisation compared to the treatment received by other employees in similar situation. At this point, it is clear that, Cynicism prompts negative elements, such as contempt, anger, shame and boredom (Abraham, 2000). And as such effort must be

made to understand how cynicism develops and manifests in organisations; because studies suggested that, although many employees are cynical, younger employees may be the most cynical! To this extent, we will assert that, this is also a major challenge to managing in today's workplace. And this was confirmed by Khan (2014) when he posited that, in this 21 century, things have greatly changed in line with globalisation, technology, and work force diversity, now this is one of the biggest challenges for leaders/managers to retain the best people in the organisation because modern organisations are facing serious Cynicism Problem. Hence, the importance of this study, "Organisational Cynicism and Employees' Intention to Quit" can never be over-emphasised!

Background of the Study

Over the years, researchers have become more interested on issues relating to organisational cynicism. As this concept of cynicism has become the subject of various disciplines in social sciences like philosophy, religion, political science, sociology, management and psychology (Ince & Turan, 2011). And according to Kanter & Mirvis (1989), as many as forty-three percent (43%) of all working Americans are frustrated, disillusioned, distrustful, and skeptical as a result of what they perceive to be unethical behaviour on the part of organisational leaders, and general uncertainties in organisations. It should also be noted, studies have shown that, frustration, disillusionment, distrustful, skepticism, and the final intention to quit the organisation are all end-results of organisational cynicism. Organisational cynicism is defined as general and specific attitudes characterised with anger, hopelessness, disappointment and a tendency to distrust individuals, groups, ideologies, social abilities or institutions (Andersson, 1996). From Andersson's definition, we can conclude that, Organisational cynicism arise when employees believe that their organisation may be deficient in general honesty. This may especially result from the perception of which basic expectations related to morality, justice and honesty are despoiled. At this juncture, we must understand that, the Human Resource is very important for any organisation especially for gaining sustainable competitive advantage across the world (Devi & Pojitha, 2012). Also, according to Cole (2004), Hassan (2009), Khan (2014), and Robbins et al. (2012), the strategic asset of every organisation is its people. No wonder, Khan (2014) further asserted that, "Organisations are made up of its people, not technology or structure"! Also, according to Khan (2014), a consulting firm evaluates human capital and states that, "the highest performing companies have the highest human resource scores".

In addition, Cynicism can be observed to have a greater link with the employees' intention to quit an organisation because according to Eaton (2000) cynical workers believe that their management team have a lack of interest towards them and use them only to take advantage in the market. To this end, it is important to understand how cynical attitudes are manifested, and how organisational cynicism might influence related attitudes such as job-satisfaction, and

motivation. These attitudes, when positively influenced, to a very large extent downplay the employees' (especially employees with high need for achievement) intention to quit any organisation. Therefore, through this study, the researchers were able to identify how organisational cynicism affects employees' intention to quit in an organisation.

2. Theoretical Basis for Organisational Cynicism

Cynicism is everywhere – United States, Europe, Asia, Middle East, Africa etc. (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; and Kouzes & Posner, 1993). In the words of Karl Marx, Cynics are made, not born! This means that, cynicism develops through experiences with organisations and organisational agents. Also, Researchers have suggested that organisational cynicism is increasing among employees. Generally, Cynicism can be described as being negative and pessimistic about others. Employees who are cynical can influence the entire organisation and can hinder the organisation from reaching her goals.

Reichers, Wanous, & Austin (1997) defined organisational cynicism as a negative approach headed for one's employing organisation. Andersson (1996) defines organisational cynicism as general or specific attitudes of disappointment, insecurity, hopelessness, anger, mistrust of institutions or persons, group, ideology and social skills.

Organisational cynicism is the belief that an organisation lacks honesty, causing hard-hitting reputation and critical behaviors when it is combined with a strong negative emotional reaction (Abraham, 2000). Cynicism has also been seen as an estimation based on an individual's work experience of the evaluator (Cole, Brunch, & Vogel, 2006). We may refer to it as the act of being unsatisfied with the organisation.

At this juncture, it is also important to note that, the underpinning theories that support the relationship between organisational cynicism and employees' intention to quit an organisation are: Equity Theory and Social Exchange Theory. The Equity Theory is primarily Adam's motivation theory that is based on the evaluation of perceived inputs to outputs (Adams, 1965; Cole, 2004; Hassan, 2009; Robbins 1993; and Robbins et al., 2012). When an individual thinks his/her inputs are not rewarded according to outputs and are unequal to others around him/her, he/she may feel dissatisfied and it leads to absenteeism and eventually intention to quit. Social Exchange Theory shows the relationship between the cost and benefits of an individual, what he expects (Emerson, 1976). So, if an employee faces high cost such as putting high effort and getting less benefits; this creates dissatisfaction towards job; and if this persists, its end-result may be quitting the organisation.

2.1. Approaches of Cynicism

According to (Ozler & Atalay, 2011), there are five approaches of cynicism which are: Personality Cynicism, Social Cynicism, Employee Cynicism, Vocational Cynicism and Organisational Change Cynicism.

Personality Cynicism shows the negative thinking of human behaviour; while the Social Cynicism reflects the social interaction of human being, and it mainly has to do with social disappointment. Employee Cynicism is the negative attitude towards the job and boss (Kosmala & Richards, 2009). Vocational Cynicism is the disagreement towards job; while organisational change cynicism is negative view point about the change in organisation (Ozler & Atalay, 2011). Organisational cynicism does not just happen, there are many factors that may cause it; and among these factors, can be an individual occupation, organisational change and role of top management (Brown & Cregan, 2008).

2.2. Employees' Intention to Quit

In the views of Tett & Meyer (1993) intention to quit is described as the desire of a person to leave an institute or organisation. Intention to quit is a decision to seek for other alternatives in other organisation (Krueger & Rouse, 1998). And this intention to quit occurs when employees voluntarily leave their jobs. No doubt, Organisational cynicism is one of the most obvious contributors to employees' intention to quit (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Quitting affects the organisation's productivity adversely, and this create many problems for organisation like hiring new employee(s), and the organisation bear the advertisement cost for hiring new employee, cost of temporary employee, and cost of selection which effects organisation productivity.

3. Methodology

This section presents the approach and procedures that were adopted in the conduct of the study.

The core approach adopted in this study was the Traditional (Narrative) Literature Review Approach. And a Descriptive Research Design was also adopted for the study; this is appropriate for studies such as this where no hypothesis was tested and data were mainly from the examination of existing records in the form of literatures such as journals and texts (Kothari & Garg, 2014; Agbonifoh & Yomere, 1999). Hence, data was sourced from basically secondary sources.

4. Results of the Study

The cardinal purpose of this paper was to critically examine from existing body of literatures, the extent to which organisational cynicism can influence employees' intention to quit such an organisation. Following an intensive study carried out on both the independent (Organisational Cynicism) and dependent (Employees' Intention to Quit) variables; we found that:

1. Cynicism can make employees become hopeless, less committed to their work, less satisfied, and at the end, the employees will decide to quit the organisation.
2. Some factors that influence cynicism are: dealing with stress, disagreement with organisational expectations, lack of social support and recognition, not having a voice in the decision-making process, unbalanced distribution of power, and lack of communication.
3. Cynical individuals can also experience positive change by providing them with trainings through attitudinal interventions, and this could result in positive gain for the organisation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Following the results or findings highlighted above, the conclusions below were reached:

1. In most cases, there is a positive and direct relationship between both variables of the study. As a result, the researchers posited that, the higher the cynicism in an organisation, the higher the employees' intention to quit such an organisation, and vice versa.
2. It was clear that, situational factors such as stress, unbalanced distribution of power, lack of communication, top management attitude and style among others can also influence the development of cynical attitudes.

Finally, the researchers recommended the following:

1. Cynicism can effectively be managed by the organisations by adopting fair practices like operating in an open and honest atmosphere, providing realistic goals, promoting cooperation among/between individuals and management, and also operating an honest and fair pay system. These can improve the confidence of the employees.
2. Workshops, Training and Development Programs can be organised for the employee through which they can experience positive development; and increase in their motivation and job-satisfaction level which will ultimately results in decrease in the intention to quit the organisation.
3. The organisation should also organise effective training programs on time management, emotional intelligence and stress management. These will also be helpful in promoting commitment and coping with stressful situations that would ultimately result in improved performance on the part of the employees.

References

- [1] Abraham, R. (2000). Organisational cynicism: Bases and consequences. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 126 (3).
- [2] Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.). *Advances in experimental social psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- [3] Agbonifoh, B. A., & Yomere, G. O. (1999). *Research methodology in the social sciences and education* (1st Ed.). Benin City, Nigeria: Uniben Press.

- [4] Andersson, Lynee. M. (1996). Employee cynicism: An examination using a contract violation framework. *Journal of Human Relations*, 49 (11).
- [5] Ayyub, S., Awam, A., & Bilal, M. (2013). Interactive effect of organisational cynicism and interpersonal mistreatment on turnover intentions. *Proceedings on International Conference on Business Management and Internationalisation Strategy*. 2.
- [6] Brown, M., & Cregan, C. (2008). Organisational change cynicism: The role of employee involvement. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 47 (4).
- [7] Cole, G. A. (2004). *Management theory and practice* (6th Ed.). London: Thompson Learning.
- [8] Cole, M., Brunch, H., & Vogel, B. (2006). Emotion as mediators of the relations between perceived supervision support and psychological hardiness on employee cynicism. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 27.
- [9] Dean J., Brandes, P., & Dharwadkar, R. (1998). Organisational cynicism. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23 (2).
- [10] Devi, V. R., & Poojitha, V. (2012). HRD—A source for competitive advantage. *Review of Research*, 1 (7).
- [11] Eaton, J. A. (2000). *A social motivation approach to organisational cynicism*. York University Toronto, Ontario.
- [12] Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2.
- [13] Hassan, M. (2009). *Business management*. Kaduna, Nigeria: Joyce Publishers.
- [14] Ince, M., and Turan, S., (2011). Organisational cynicism as a factor that affects the organizational change in the process of globalisation and an application in karaman's public institutions. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 37.
- [15] Kanter, D. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (1989). *The Cynical americans: Living and working in an age of discontent and disillusion*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- [16] Khan, M. A. (2014). Organisational cynicism and employee turnover intention: Evidence from Banking Sector in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*. Vol. 8 (1).
- [17] Kosmala, K., & Richards, J. (2009). Re-visiting employee cynicism: On decentrement of the subject via work blogging. Retrieved: October, 2017; <http://mnngt.waikato.ac.nz>.
- [18] Kothari, C. R., & Garg, G. (2014). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (3rd ed.). Daryaganj, New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd, Publishers.
- [19] Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1993). *Credibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- [20] Krueger, A., & Rouse, C. (1998). The Effect of workplace education on earning, turnover and job performance. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 16.
- [21] McClelland, D. (1961). *The Achieving society*. D. Van Nostrand: Prentice, N. J.
- [22] Nafei, W. A. & Kaifi, B. A. (2013). The impact of organisational cynicism on organisational commitment: An applied research on Teaching Hospitals in Egypt. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 15 (2).
- [23] Nair, P., & Kamalanabhan, T. J. (2010). The impact of cynicism on ethical intentions of indian managers: The moderating role of their level of management. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*, 1 (2).
- [24] Ozler, D. E., & Atalay, C. G. (2011). A research to determine the relationship between organisational cynicism and burnout levels of employees in Health Sector. *Business and Management Review*, 1 (4).
- [25] Reichers, A. E., Wanous, J. P., & Austin, J. T. (1997). Understanding and managing cynicism about organisational change. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 11 (1).
- [26] Robbins, S. P. (1993). *Organisational behaviour* (6th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- [27] Robbins, S. P., Judge, T. A., & Vohra, N. (2012). *Organisational behaviour* (14th Ed.). New Delhi, India: Prentice Hall.
- [28] Scott, K. A., & Zweig, D. (2008). *Dispositional predictors of organisational cynicism*. Unpublished Paper, Department of Management, University of Toronto.
- [29] Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organisational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analysis based on meta-analytical findings. *Personal Psychology*, 46 (2).