Altruistic Love Culture and Workers' Commitment in the Nigerian Manufacturing Industry: A Study in Workplace Spirituality

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This study, which was based on a sample of 235 middle and senior level organizational members, examined the association between 'altruistic love' as an element in the emerging theme of 'workplace spirituality', and 'workers' commitment' in the Nigerian manufacturing industry. The study found that a culture of altruistic love leads to high workers' affective and normative commitment, as well as low workers' continuance commitment. The study therefore recommends that Nigerian manufacturing organizations should strive to show devotion to organizational members through acts of benevolence, care and concern, in order to be assured of their high level of commitment to work.

INTRODUCTION

Workers' commitment has been observed to be of prime importance to managers and researchers, and is acknowledged to be a crucial factor in achieving organizational success. Consequently, it is argued that "in the management discourse, commitment is a central variable, given that more committed people tend to devote higher efforts to work, thus contributing to organizational performance" (Rego and Cunha, 2007, p.4). It therefore implies that in order for organizations to be successful, employees need to be committed to, and be passionate about their work (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2006a). Accordingly, "organizational commitment continues to be a topical issue in management research and continues to engage the attention of practicing managers" (Gbadamosi, 2003, p.274). Recognizing the sources of organizational commitment has therefore become increasingly important for organizations, and it is argued that over thirty years of research has been done to investigate how commitment influences organizational life Overberghe, et.al., 2003). This view is corroborated by the assertion that "organizational commitment (OC) has been seen as one of the most important variables in the study of management and organizational behavior in the last three decades" (Liu, 2000, p.1).

In the face of the obvious importance of workers' commitment in organizational practice, there is now a growing need for the emergence of a theory that encapsulates the full panoply of contributive forces which lead to workers' commitment. For, it has been averred that "little attention has been paid in the literature to the investigation of spirituality as a cultural phenomenon that might influence organizational behavior and induce organizational change" (Oliveira, 2002, p.17). Thus, while research that examines the relationship between organizational processes and commitment is well developed (Kwon, 2002), there is a dearth of theory to elucidate the impact of the critical facets of workplace spirituality on workers

behavior, and one of these critical facets, as identified in extant literature is 'altruistic love' (Fry and Matherly, 2006). Moreover, in Nigeria at present, the impact of this critical facet on workers' commitment has not been empirically examined, although there is evidence of low level of workers' commitment in the country (Aluko, 2004). We have therefore, in this study, examined the nature of 'altruistic love', which is a spiritual component of man, and its impact on workers' commitment in the Nigerian manufacturing industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Altruistic Love

For purposes of analysis, 'altruistic love' can be regarded as one of the empirical referents of 'spiritual leadership', and much more than the recent leadership theories, spiritual leadership institutes an organizational culture based on self sacrificing love that increases both the leaders' and followers' devotion (Fry, 2003). Spiritual leadership appeals to the members' sense of altruism, which is defined as "the love of one's fellow humans that leads to de-emphasis on one's self-interest and focuses instead on the interests of others" (Lantos, 1999, p.224). It is therefore posited that motives like moral convictions, compassion, and love, as well as the sense of duty, and principles or beliefs that transcend self-interest and call for self-sacrifice, prompt people to employ their scarce resources for reasons other than their economic need for reciprocity or rational self-interest (Light, 2007). The characteristic features of altruistic love are thus attributed to being responsible for increased sense of membership in leaders and followers (Fry, 2003). These characteristic features of altruistic love include forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy and compassion, honesty, patience, courage, trust and loyalty, and humility. Accordingly it is believed that "altruistic acts lead to that 'warm glow' and sense of moral satisfaction that comes from helping (or, at least, not harming) others" (Lantos, 1999, p.224) and as such, "the Judeo-Christian tradition sums it up in the maxims 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' and 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Lantos, 1999, p.224). It is thus argued that altruistic love increases workers' sense of membership (Fry, 2003), and gives them a reason to be optimistic.

Workers' Commitment

Commitment is viewed as identification, involvement and loyalty to ones organization, as well as a feeling of obligation to stay with ones organization (Gbadamosi, 2003). In this regard, commitment is identification with the goals and values of the organization which manifests as a craving to belong to the organization and the associated readiness to display effort on its behalf (Armstrong, 2003). In this study, we have adopted the concise definition of workers' commitment as "a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (Meyer, et. al., 1993, p.539). This view of commitment, which determines the likelihood that an organizational member will leave does not only propose a definition of commitment, but also its measurement (Gbadamosi, 2003). Accordingly, workers' commitment has been operationalized as a three-component model and is thus a multi-dimensional construct consisting of three distinct forms of commitment, namely: affective, continuance and normative commitment (Meyer, et.al., 1993). Affective commitment, which is also referred to as attitudinal commitment (Ahiauzu, 2005) is a psychological attachment to the organization and it indicates the comparative potency of an employee's identification with the organization, such that the employee is willing to remain with the organization because he or she wants to do so. Employees with normative commitment on the other hand, feel a persuasive sense of obligation such that their willingness to stay with the organization is because they feel they ought to do so. Employees with continuance commitment or calculative commitment (Ahiauzu, 2005) count the cost of leaving an organization and base their judgment on whether to stay or live on the outcome of the cost benefit analysis.

Nexus of Altruistic Love and Workers' Commitment

We have identified earlier that altruistic love involves among several other features, altruistic values of compassion and empathy, which prompt organizational members into actions of self sacrifice. It has been argued that there is empirical evidence to the effect that compassion elicits commitment in organizational members (Lilius, et.al., 2005). This position is anchored on empirical evidence that the worker's perception of being valued and cared about encourages employee's self-identity, which strengthens commitment to the organization (Meyer, et.al., 1993). Consequently, it is only plausible that altruistic love will result in person-organization fit. For, such altruistic values exemplified in benevolent activities "engender positive emotions and can result in more positive employee attitudes about work" (Rego, et.al., 2006, p.10). Buttressing this view, is the assertion that "frequent experiences of positive emotion at work may lead to pleasant emotional associations with the workplace" (Lilius et.al., 2005, p.10), and through this association, commitment to the organization is strengthened. We therefore hypothesize that:

H$_1$:   There is a significant and positive association between Altruistic Love and Workers' Affective Commitment.

H$_2$:   There is a significant and positive association between Altruistic Love and Workers' Continuance Commitment.

H$_3$:   There is a significant and positive association between Altruistic Love and Workers' Normative Commitment.

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

Methodology and Research Results

This study was a cross-sectional survey. The study units for data generation were individual organizational members and the micro-level of analysis was adopted. The population of the study was 1,500 middle and senior level organization-members of manufacturing firms listed in the 2007 updated directory of the Port Harcourt zone of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) and the sample size determined from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table (Sarantakos, 2005, p.173) was 306, which, after data cleaning, reduced to 235. In selecting the respondents the simple random sampling technique was adopted. We adopted the concurrent methodological paradigm triangulation approach by combining both the Nomothetic and Ideographic methods of data collection and analysis. We thus used both the questionnaire and in-depth interview for data generation. Data on altruistic love were obtained using the Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT) Survey Instrument (Fry, et.al., 2005). Data on the three measures of workers' commitment were obtained using the revised Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Allen et.al., 1993). These instruments were revalidated by adopting Confirmatory Factor Analysis in a Pilot Survey carried out on a few organizations in the Manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. Responses to each of the items in the research instrument were rated using a 5-point Likert scale. The demographic section of the instrument had questions on respondents' educational level, tenure, status in organization, and religion. For test of reliability of the scale the following Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained: Altruistic Love (.86), Affective Commitment (.77), Continuance Commitment (.71), and Normative Commitment (.73). Judging by the .70 benchmark (Nunnaly, 1978), the reliability level of the study scale is therefore acceptable.

Frequencies and descriptives were used in our primary analysis, which focused on the study demographics and univariate analysis respectively. The results showed that out of the total of 235 respondents, 91 (38.7%) were at the senior organizational level, while 144 (61.3%) were at the middle level. 155 respondents or 66.0%, had spent between one and nine years on their jobs while those who had spent between ten and nineteen years were 70 (29.8%). Only 10 persons or 4.3% of respondents had spent at least 20 years on their job. We also had 225 (95.7%) Christians, 2 (0.9%) Muslims and 8 (3.4%) affiliated to other religious groups. The results of univariate analysis are shown in Table 1. The following

mean scores (x) were obtained for the study variables: Altruistic Love (3.18), Affective Commitment (3.30), Continuance Commitment (2.91), and Normative Commitment (3.12).

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDY VARIABLES

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. Error
ALTLOVE	235	3.1897	.83434	-.390	.159
AFFCOM	235	3.3014	.74171	-.296	.159
CONCOM	235	2.9191	.67099	.248	.159
NORMCOM	235	3.1291	.71653	-.417	.159
Valid N (listwise)	235				

At our secondary level of analysis, inferential statistics results such as Pearson r correlation coefficients and Regression coefficients including the p-values, were obtained for purposes of testing the research hypotheses. Correlation analyses using the Pearson r correlation were interpreted based on Guilford's (1956) scale (Irving, 2005, p.16). The coefficient r significant at 0.01 level for hypothesis 1 is 0.448; for hypothesis 2 is 0.294; and for hypothesis 3 is 0.483. Basing our decision on Kerlinger and Lee's (2000) benchmark (Irving, 2005, p.16) we thus accept H_1, H_2 and H_3 that there is a significantly positive association between altruistic love and workers' affective, continuance and normative commitment. The correlation coefficient (r) and coefficient of determination (r^2) are shown in tables 2, 3 and 4.

TABLE 2
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ALTRUISTIC LOVE AND WORKERS' AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.448[a]	.201	.197	.66448

a. Predictors: (Constant), Altruistic Love

TABLE 3
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ALTRUISTIC LOVE AND WORKERS' CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.294[a]	.087	.083	.64264

a. Predictors: (Constant), Altruistic Love

TABLE 4
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ALTRUISTIC LOVE AND WORKERS' NORMATIVE COMMITMENT

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.483[a]	.233	.230	.62872

a. Predictors: (Constant), Altruistic Love

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between altruistic love, and affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. From the result, altruistic love positively co-varies with affective commitment (r = 0.448, p = 0.000 < 0.01). The correlation coefficient represents a moderate correlation indicating substantial relationship. Specifically, the result ($R^2 = 0.20$; p < 0.01) suggests that an increase in the level of altruistic love by one unit reflects a 0.20 unit increase in workers' affective commitment. In other words altruistic love accounts for a 20% increase in workers' affective commitment. Thus, it appears that the more workers feel a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well being as a result of the expression of care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, the more the likelihood that they will be psychologically attached to their organization. This outcome buttresses the fact that one way to substantially increase workers emotional involvement at work is to substantially enhance the stock of altruism within the organization. Virtues of unselfishness, self-sacrifice and selflessness, and philanthropy are consequently important components for positively raising the level of workers poignant state at work.

Also, altruistic love significantly and positively co-varies with continuance commitment. The extent of co-variation is low (r = 0.294, p = 0.000 < 0.01), indicating definite but small relationship. Specifically, the result ($R^2 = 0.08$; p < 0.01) suggests that an increase in the level of altruistic love by one unit reflects a small 0.08 unit increase in workers' continuance commitment. In other words altruistic love accounts for a paltry 8% increase in workers' continuance commitment. Therefore, unlike the substantial influence that altruism appears to be having on affective commitment, it is only minimally responsible for workers calculative commitment. Since the results show that altruistic love, like the other dimensions of spiritual leadership, is not a major determining factor of continuance commitment, it is perceptible that as workers do a calculation of the cost associated with leaving their organization, the sense of wholeness they feel as a result of the level of care in their organization barely comes to bear on their decision. Even when it does, it is only to a small extent.

Finally, from the results, altruistic love significantly and positively co-varies with normative commitment (r = 0.483, p = 0.000 < 0.01). In this instance, the correlation coefficient represents a moderate correlation indicating substantial relationship. Specifically, the result ($R^2 = 0.23$; p < 0.01) suggests that an increase in the level of altruistic love by one unit reflects a 0.23 unit increase in workers' affective commitment. In other words altruistic love accounts for a 23% increase in workers' continuance commitment. Here again, the association that exists between altruistic love and normative commitment indicates how important the virtues of unselfishness, self-sacrifice and selflessness, and philanthropy are to the creation of a strong sense of obligation on workers towards their organization. The results of our QSR Nvivo-based analysis of qualitative data obtained through the in-debt personal interviews were consistent with the foregoing quantitative results. Model Fit of the data, was confirmed through the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.53, and the following indices were obtained: RMSEA= 0.11, Chi-Square= 1035.34, df= 269, RFI= 0.80, NFI= 0.82 and CFI= 0.86.

Research Findings and Discussion

From the foregoing results we find that in the Nigerian manufacturing industry: (1) as organizational members' feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing increase due to the level of care and appreciation at work, they substantially identify with, get involved in, and get emotionally attached to the organization;

(2) organization-members' commitment based on their recognition of the cost associated with leaving the organization is only minimally influenced by their feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing at work; and (3) as organization-members' feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing increase due to the level of care and appreciation at work, they substantially develop a sense of obligation towards the organization. It is worth reiterating that "frequent experiences of positive emotion at work may lead to pleasant emotional associations with the workplace" (Lilius, et.al, 2005, p.10). We have identified from our study that this seems to be the case in the Nigerian manufacturing industry as organizations are very much characterized by sufficient levels of humaneness, mutual care, trust-worthiness and honesty, and therefore have members that are emotionally glued to their organization. These acts of altruism exhibited in the Nigerian manufacturing industry are first and foremost demonstrated by organizational leaders, which accordingly trickle down to other organization-members. Earlier we had established that altruistic love involves among several others, altruistic values of compassion and empathy, which prompt organizational members into actions of self sacrifice. Our results show a widespread expression of compassion and empathy by leaders in the Nigerian manufacturing industry, and these acts of altruism inspire in the members the desire to engage in acts of selflessness. Our findings suggest strongly that this is so because altruism has a positive association with affective commitment. It has therefore become apparent from this study that as altruism is enhanced within the organization, it bears a direct and positive consequence on workers' emotional attachment to the organization. This view is borne out of our finding in this study that as organizational members exhibit kindness, forgiveness/acceptance, empathy, and the other distinguishing characteristics of altruistic love, their sense of membership increases as they are better positioned to understand, appreciate and feel emotionally attached to one another. We therefore argue that as organizational members' feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing increase due to the level of care and appreciation at work, their psychological alignment with the organization is strengthened. Moreover, it does appear that a direct consequence of altruistic love is workers' attainment of heights of joy that they may not reach ordinarily. This argument is supported by the empirical evidence. For example, it has been shown empirically that compassion, which is an act of altruism, elicits commitment in organizational members (Meyer and Allen, 1991) and worker's perception of being valued and cared about encourage their self-identity, which strengthens commitment to the organization (Lilius et.al., 2005).

We have also established in this study on the Nigerian manufacturing industry that as organizational members' feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing increase due to the level of care and appreciation at work, they substantially develop a sense of obligation towards the organization. Accordingly in the Judeo-Christian account of the first century church, Paul the apostle wrote to the Roman Christians to *"owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law"* (Holy Bible: Romans 13:8). Thus, it can be argued that it is inherent in human beings to feel obliged to reciprocate love shown to them. As a consequence of this sense of obligation, workers' sense of connection to the organization is enhanced by a culture of altruism. Accordingly, it has been posited that altruistic love increases workers sense of membership (Fry, 2003). We therefore argue that as workers' connectedness to the organization is enhanced by charitable conducts of organizational members, they become increasingly obliged to stay with the organization. In this regard, values of love results in stronger obligation and this is because it ensures that a person-organization fit is maintained (Rego and Cunha, 2007). It has thus been averred that "people with a sense of calling and membership will become attached, loyal to, and want to stay in organizations that have cultures based on the values of altruistic love" (Fry and Whittington, 2005, p.188). This view is further buttressed by the view that values of altruism "engender positive emotions and can result in more positive employee attitudes about work" (Rego, et.al., 2006, p.10). Such values epitomized in benevolent activities as we see among organizational members in the Nigerian manufacturing industry ensures that organizational members believe very strongly that their lives have meaning and make a difference at work. Correspondingly, they feel amply understood and appreciated at work. Thus, there are depths of love that organizational members could attain and consequently feel a huge sense of indebtedness towards both the organization and its members.

The study findings however reveal that unlike affective and normative commitment, continuance commitment is the only measure of workers' commitment that does not share a strong direct relationship with altruistic love. We have thus established in this study that in the Nigerian manufacturing industry, organizational members' commitment based on their recognition of the cost associated with leaving the organization is only minimally influenced by their feeling of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing at work. This finding is also supported in literature (Rego and Cunha, 2007; Rego, et.al., 2006; Fry, 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewick, 2003). This study outcome can be explained by the assertion that it is rather 'sunk costs' that substantially impact on workers' continuance commitment (Jex, et.al., 2003).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

From the outcome of this study, we conclude that: (1) As organizations in the Nigerian manufacturing industry exhibit high altruistic values, epitomized in charitable actions of organizational members, workers' affective commitment is significantly increased; (2) As organizations in the Nigerian manufacturing industry exhibit high altruistic values, epitomized in charitable actions of organizational members, workers' normative commitment is significantly increased; and (3) Workers' continuance commitment does not increase proportionately to the degree to which organizations in the Nigerian manufacturing industry exhibit high altruistic values. We thus argue that although high altruistic values epitomized in charitable actions of organizational members only contribute minimally towards workers' continuance commitment, they contribute substantially towards the high level of workers' affective and normative commitment. One of the implications of the study outcome is that the leadership of organizations should endeavour to strengthen bonds of relationship among organizational members with emphasis being placed on people rather than things. Organizational members should be made to feel loved and cared for by organizational leaders, who should listen to the needs of subordinates, empathize with them and reward useful contributions made by them towards organizational goal attainment.

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