Social Capital and Workplace Injustice: A Dark Side Discourse

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Abstract— **The Paper examined perceived injustice within the context of the dark side of social capital in workplaces. Perceived workplace injustice could have extremely calamitous employee behavioral manifestations. Hinging on the social identity theory, the study reflected on the alternative perspectives of social capital to elucidate the meaning of injustice based on social interactions and employee experiences within their work settings. The tenets of social capital are deeply rooted in the mental psyche of the average Nigerian and the apparent socio-cultural disposition of the people accommodates this. However, immoderate pursuit of the interest of social capital acquisition and build-up could breed injustice with its attendant ripple effect on the work outcomes of employees. This paper highlighted some tell-tale signs of injustice in structural formations and policies and contributes to the discourse on the dark side of organizational behavior. The study recommended the downplaying of in-group interests in favor of the upholding of the move towards the general goals of the organizations.**

Index Terms— **Behavior, discrimination, diversity, identity, Nigeria.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Injustice as a phenomenon occurs in social systems and will usually be more recognizable by the victims, sufferers or casualties in such systems. An assumption of the rational desire of employees is that they would prefer not to have any form of experiences that could have any hurtful mental and/or physical denouement. Injustice is perhaps one of the most unpleasant experienced phenomenon observable within the workplace. The recollection of the experiential knowledge of the signs of injustice often refreshes harrowing memories of distress and discomfort. Persons could exhibit all sorts of reactions to the experience of injustice in the workplace. Workplace Injustice has the capacity of distorting meaningful employee contributions and destabilizing the entire workplace setting through employee behavioral manifestations and consequences. Workplace injustice, also referred to as organizational injustice, is any act by a person or institution that counteracts the common good of individuals and the work organization as a whole. As succinctly put by Barclay and Saldanha (2015) people can experience damaging emotional, psychological, and even physical consequences as an aftermath of workplace injustice. Justice is recognized as an action or decision that is understood to be morally right on the basis of ethics, religious, fairness, equity, or law (Pekurinen, Välimäki, Virtanen, Salo, Kivimäki

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&Vahtera,2017). Neuman (2004) has identified injustice as one of the critical ubiquitous variables within the work setting that tends to have enormous impact on the health and wellbeing of the individuals and the ultimate economic prosperity and viability of organizations.

It is important to note that social capital acquisition or build-up in workplaces is an attempt at meeting the basic social need of working persons. Omobowale and Olutayo (2009) have posited that social capital is a virtue through which third world communities may develop and that the bonds of love, trust, friendship and kinship as social ingredients of social capital have become the salvaging grace for the third world in the face of strangulating economic decline and crisis. Workplace social capital has been regarded as synonymous with teamwork (Perzynski, Caron, Margolius & Sudano, 2019). These authors see social capital as a solution provider to burnout and an opportunity to improve employee well-being. In spite of all these lofty meanings adduced to social capital, if the social relationship leads to group formations that are overly self-seeking, then the outcome is not likely to be palatable. It is apparent that in order not to feel any form of deficiency in the number and nature of beneficial social capital working persons acquire at work, there seems to be a compelling urge to seek and pursue in- group membership and interests to the detriment of out-group and organizations general interests. Behtoui and Neergaard (2010) observed that that being a member of a stigmatized group is associated with a substantial social capital deficit. This deficit could arise when persons are embedded in social networks that constrain their ability to acquire valuable social resources or are excluded from social networks with valuable resources.

Injustice in the workplace is a must –talk- about issue if getting the right attitudes to work is of paramount importance in organizations. In the controversial dispositions of the definition of injustice, the dominant position is that injustice means lack of justice. However, it has been vehemently argued that injustice and justice are somewhat mutually exclusive. This paper sees injustice beyond the absence of justice. This is in the line of thought of authors who argued that injustice is not primarily the negation or failure of justice (Heinze, 2012). Heinze(2016) asserted that it is possible to increase the justice of a situation without reducing the injustice and argued that an increase in justice can actually cause an increase in injustice. By this reasoning, the author sees injustice as construed to be not merely as the inadequate realization of one or more given conceptions of justice, but more importantly as the product of those same conceptions.

It is worthy of note that employees' positive organizational behaviors promote organizational function, improves individual as well as organizational performance and organizational justice is a likely predictor of such organizational behavioral outcomes (Pan, Chen, Hao & Bi,2018) . Injustice is a breeder of all sorts of behaviors that tend towards organizational dysfunction which Griffin and O'leary-Kelly(2004) considered as the dark side of organizational behavior. The authors advanced that the dark sides of organizational behavior are motivated behaviors by an employee or group of employees that have negative consequences for an individual within the organization, another group of individuals within the organization or the organization itself.

This paper contributes to thediscourse on the dark side of organizational behavior through its reflection on the tell –tale signs of injustice in the bid to redirect the focus of social capital in workplaces and stimulate useful thoughts aimed at focusing on the goals of the entire organization.

I. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Thiswork greatly aligns with the Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978). The theory asserts that group membership can enhance ways individuals behave within the in-group and usually at the expense of out-group members. In work organizations there could be the existence of multiple social contexts in social identification basis which persons could relate to. In Nigerian workplaces where there are lots of identity variations, ethno-cultural , socio-religious , eco-political , gender-based as well as other conjoining, intersecting, overlapping and interloping interest groups remain strong. Strong group identification can predict whether discriminatory behaviors will or will not occur within a work setting (Ugwuzor, 2014). Tajfel and Turner (2004) have opined that as group members are motivated to maintain their social identities, they tend to exhibit a favorable bias towards others who appear to have similar characteristics. Social identity theory attributes the cause of in-group favoritism to a psychological need for positive distinctiveness (Ellemers & Barreto, 2003). These authors also emphasized that the social identity theory**,** allows for the study of the interplay between personal and social identities and aims to specify and predict the circumstances under which individuals think of themselves as individuals or as group members. In view of the foregoing, one will not be surprised to observe concerted efforts of persons in workplaces in Nigeria being made in attempts at strategizing in order to build their social capital by belonging to or identifying with certain privileged groups for ulterior motives and personal aggrandizement. Where such intrigues are prevalent, behaviors depicting various levelsofdiscontentment, prejudice and perceived injustice administration are likely to be observed.

II. **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND WORKPLACE INJUSTICE**

The socio-cultural and other diversity dispositions of the Nigerian people recognize and accommodate close ties with family, friends and associates. Social capital could help facilitate information exchange and collection and pave the way for cooperation and interaction (Allameh, 2018). Social capital has been defined as the set of cooperative relationships between social actors that facilitate collective action (Requena, 2003). This concept has been variously analyzed. Meng, Clausen and Borg (2018) believe in the social capital model of bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital. Requena(2003) measured social capital based on five dimensions of trust, social relations, commitment, communication and influence . Nahapiet and Goshen (1998) looked at social capital in three dimensions namely, structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions. They saw the structural dimension as the pattern of connections between actors in social systems, the relational dimension as the quality of the relationships and strength of attachment between members of a social system while the cognitive dimension refers to the resources in a social system leading to shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning. To Lochner, Kawachi and Kennedy (1999) the concept of social capital was focused on four constructs of collective efficacy, psychological sense of community, neighborhood cohesion and community competence. Other authors have seen trust, membership of associations and commitment to others as a proxy measure for social capital (Liu, Milojev, Gil de Zúñiga, & Zhang,2018; Markowska-Przybyła & Ramsey ,2016)

III. It is not uncommon for employees to have social ties with their co-workers all of which affect aspects of their behavior and the meaning of social relationships in organizations.In work settings,one cannot but observe the fundamental importance of social process and pressures as well as coworkers' reactions to them**.** This they can sometimes do throughwhat Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly (2004) described asdestructive political behaviors in organizations where persons makeintentional efforts to use power in order to advance preferred courses of action. The dimensions of dark side of social capital was operationalized to mean workplace alliances where bonding, bridging and linking social capital efforts for in-group members undermine trust and social relations as well as elucidate meanings of discord and inequity with out-group members.

Workplace injustice is an encapsulation of an employee's perception of fairness and equity on the job. Extant literature on organizational justice identified its components to include distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice and informational justice. Distributive justice relates to the employees' perception of the fairness of an organization's rewards system in relation to the work outcomes; Procedural justice, is concerned with the process of determining resource allocation; Interactional justice focuses on an employee's perception of the nature of interpersonal relations and how they are treated by other persons as they do their work; Informational justice deals with the amount, authenticity and clarity of information regarding outcome distributions and the procedures used to determine outcomes (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997 :Greenberg,2001). Ma and Qu (2011)opined that

persons working in organizations will tend to reciprocate the behavioral treatment given to them. The consequences of injustice can be cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

Justicehas been regarded as theideaofcreatinginstitutionsthatunderstandandvaluehumanrights,recognizethedignityofevery humanbeing and arebasedonthe principlesofequalityandsolidarity (Oko,2020).Injustice underlies many organizational behavioral challenges in workplaces and manifests itself in many facets. In some situations, victims may just decide to leave the organization. Conversely and perhaps due to high rates of employment, inability of persons to find ready alternative jobs, lack of job mobility or even the thought of the cost of such change in jobs, persons tend to stay in the firms and exhibit behaviors that reflect dark side behaviors . Some dark side behaviors may include revenge, retaliation, and counterproductive work behaviors (Barclay& Saldanha, 2015). Injustice may also be seen as inability and unwillingness of a person to make self-sacrificial efforts for the good of all irrespective of the social colorations of the general populace. Issues of poor workforce diversity management are glaring as conflicting interests on issues concerning ethnicity, tribalism, religion and gender are highly prevalent and dominate the thoughts of the employees. Some employees are actively involved in politicking and the battles for supremacy of each of their goals as well as social capital acquisition and build- up efforts aimed at courses of action that relegate the success of the organization to oblivion. Some of these acts have been identified as self-destructive (Ugwuzor, 2021). Although all categories of employees could be guilty of such acts, it has been posited that unethical leadership behaviors increase followers' deviance by increasing perception of injustice and politics in organizations (Asnakew & Mekonnen, 2019).

An assumption of victims of injustice is that they will react in a directly proportional manner in relation to the felt unjust treatment. The actions and counter actions of victims of workplace injustice could be overwhelming. Instances of injustice could be identified and described by victims as being weighted against their interests. Managers can only tackle the challenges if there is a vivid understanding of its intricacies.

IV. TELL- TALE SIGNS OF WORKPLACE INJUSTICE

V. Employees would usually have preconceived expectations of firms they work for. However, it may be the least of their expectations as they strive to improve their personal economic status, social status or any other desired status, that they will be faced with terrorizing and tormenting workplace situational presentations as reflected by apparent or real forms of injustice. Injustice is felt or rated sense of inequity or feeling of receiving undeserved outcomes. Injustice situations may seem ambiguous and even the determinants may seem subjective, however victims know exactly how they feel and organizations know no peace. With job insecurity on their minds, many victims may opt not to lodge formal complaints

for fear of further jeopardizing the prevailing quagmire. However managers may observe and take cues from some tell-tale signs to avert the likely reactions from victims.

Employees may sometimes reckon that statutory corporate justice systems in operation emphasize injustice. A workplace may be adjudged as unfair or unjust if policies are perceived as biased against persons outside perceived privileged social groups or groupings with traces of tribalism, ableism,chauvinism, jingoism, religious bigotry, ageism, sexism,sectarianism and other perceived bases for discrimination and victimization. This could be observed from informal and formal complaints of unfair applications of disciplinary actions, unfair distribution of work, exclusion, discrimination in appraisal as well as in career advancement for qualified persons as it relates to variously identified basis of diversity biases.

Also, when policies and praxis do not represent the concerns of supposed beneficiary and the victims feel that they have neither voice in the decision making process nor the opportunity nor avenue to seek redress; in situations where there are no clearly delineated paths in determining outcomes and the rewards and their allocation formulas are inconsistent; as well as if persons are mistreated and maltreated and without recourse to their sensitivity concerns. All of these and more will not only the raise hue and cry from victimized interest groups but also increase the number and frequency of workplace and industrial conflicts and crises which should be able to make visible the handwriting on the wall.

Victims of injustice could choose to react covertly or overtly in ways commensurate with the felt unjust treatment. The envisioned outcomes of employee behavioral manifestations as well as their eventual likely potentialities are enough to make social actors within the workplace to advance courses of actions that will counteract and mitigate the anticipated catastrophic eventualities. Studies abound to show that employees perception of injustice in work situations have effects on organizational citizenship behavior, employee innovativeness ,job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment and general work performance (Akram,Lei,Haider & Hussain,2020; Mengstie,2020;Shkoler &Tziner ,2017, Swalhi, Zgoulli & Hofaidhllaoui,2017). There is also evidence that workplace injustice enhances deviant workplace behaviors, workplace sabotage psychological strain as well as knowledge hiding because of employees psychologically disconnect from their organization(Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002;Francis & Barling, 2005;Khattak, Khan, Fatima, Zulfiqar & Shah,2019;Jahanzeb, De Clercq & Fatima,2021). Employees' perceptions of injustice could also have tremendous impact on their psychological well-being (Tepper, 2001). Employee workplace injustice could lead to sufficient stress and strain which could affect family life (Kumar, Ali Arain & Ahmed Channa, 2019). Francis and Barling (2005) categorized perceived injustice as a form of stress, and pscychological strain.One would not also be surprised by the display of abjectpoverty of positively creative ideas which is attributable to workplaceinjustice. Reb,Goldman, Kray and Cropanzano

(2006) have proposed that to alleviate the negative effects of workplace unfairness and resulting conflict, organizations can take remedial action to atone for a perceived injustice.

VI. WAY FORWARD/CONCLUSION

From the forgoing it is obvious that employees react in various ways to injustice. Thetaskofreducing or possibly eliminating perceivedinjusticein workplaces is in the hands of all and sundry in progress-seeking organizations but relying majorly on the managers to drive the process. Firms could also make efforts to help victims of injustice to recover. Thiswork consideredtheissue of workplace injustice within the context of the dark side of social capital.

This dysfunctional aspect of social capital exhibit how the excessive pursuit of the interest of social capital acquisition could breed injustice with its attendant ripple effect on the work outcomes of employees. The workplace seems to reflect various identifiable levels of the distribution of injustice to employees who are deficient in aspects of social capital as the distribution of organizational favors and punishments tend to follow certain social colorations. This calls on managers to ensure the elimination of injustice by taking steps such as dismantling walls of discrimination and segregation by instituting fair corporate structural praxis and focus on the aggregation of the organizations goals. There should be a general reorientation on the values of equity and fairness.Managers should devise means to be alert to the tell-tale signs of injustice and develop strategies that will help prevent the occurrence and or minimize consequences. To eliminate injustice, institutionalized processes and structures should be able to educate persons and groups on the need to the focused on the organizations goals and to understand the cares of others as well as being devoid of any form of un-empathetic cues.

If the reactions of employees to certain perceived level of workplace injustice are anything to go by, then workplace policies must strive to uphold equity and fairness by adjusting social relationships within the firms and focusing on the goals of the entire organization that will lead to positive organizational benefits rather than selfish motives of groups with self -destructive tendencies.

It is no gain saying that injustice does not benefit the organization in anyway and as such social capital could be adjusted to mean social capital towards the goals of the organization. This study recommends the downplaying of in-group interests in favor of the upholding of the move towards the general goals of the organizations.

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