WORK TRANSPARENCY AND INNOVATION ACCOUNTABILITY IN A SELECTED ORGANIZATION IN NIGERIA

Maxwell Olokundun, Covenant University
Stephen Ibidunni, Covenant University
Mercy Ogbari, Covenant University
Joy Dirisu, Covenant University
Precious Dada, Covenant University

ABSTRACT

Innovation accountability can be activated by creating a culture of workplace transparency in an organization. Hence, workplace transparency is a philosophy that should be espoused by every organization that yearns for a critical framework to drive innovation undertaken by employees across all levels. This study critically examined the effect of workplace transparency on innovation accountability with a focus on Nigeria. To achieve this goal, a sample size of 89 academic and non-academic staff of covenant university in Ogun State, Nigeria, were used. The data collected were analysed by means of regression analysis. The result showed that workplace transparency has positive significant effect on innovation transparency (p<0.05). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that workplace culture of accountability in which employees feel empowered to take responsibility and have the poise to innovate should be created by top management.

Keywords: Workplace Transparency, Innovation Accountability, Strategy, Management, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Innovation has a tendency to flourish in an atmosphere where there are less administrative restraints and a craving for calculated and intended risk (Gregory, 2016). Nevertheless, without an organized management system in place, innovation can go wrong and great innovative ideas may be jeopardized. Therefore, the concept of innovation accountability becomes salient as regards providing the critical framework to support the innovation process to budding stage (Florio et al., 2014). One of the utmost blockades to effective innovation in the workplace in Nigeria is the failure to get ideas carried out and employed. It is important to note that the Nigerian workplace setting is typically characterized by a hierarchical structure. However, a hierarchical or ranked structure in which the decision maker is usually not available coupled with a situation where there is a lack of transparency with the predominant innovation goals, is frequently alluded to as a crucial issue in the Nigerian workplace (Estlund, 2014). Consequently, for innovation accountability to exist in the workplace particularly in the Nigerian context, targets have to be set, visibility and clarity of vital strategic goals and objectives needs to be established and the liberty and autonomy to make decisions at all levels within the organization should be encouraged (Genus & Stirling, 2017). Thus, the concepts of workplace

transparency and innovation accountability becomes imperative as the building blocks upon which workplace innovation strategy can be reinforced in the Nigerian setting. To this end, studies such as Berggren and Bernstein (2007) and Schaerer et al. (2018) have examined workplace transparency and organizational performance however, considering the relationship between workplace transparency and innovation accountability there is a need to empirically examine the effect of workplace transparency on innovation accountability with emphasis on the Nigerian context.

WORK TRANSPARENCY AND INNOVATION ACCOUNTABILITY

Albu (2014) suggested that the characteristic of a transparent workplace involves communication of organizational goals with clarity and honesty, regular feedback, and respect for superior opinions. Wehmeier and Raaz (2012) noted that transparency in the workplace is not only important among co-workers, but is a key to healthy relationships between managers and their employees. However, as stated by Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014) sustaining a transparent working relationship with co-workers may not be challenging, but when it comes to providing honest feedback to a manager or supervisor, this may pose some challenges for many individuals. If a supervisor or manager proposes an idea that lacks substance, it is important for an employee or subordinate to be honest, but share opinions in a constructive manner (Christensen & Cheney, 2015). It is important that feedback should be related to the issue at hand, rather than a criticism of the boss' management style (Wehmeier & Raaz, 2012). Many employers ask their employees to exhibit the traits of a transparent workplace, such as honesty, respect and admitting when they're wrong however, as noted by Roberts (2012) unless an employer also acts in this manner, the workplace won't truly be transparent. Therefore, it is important that employers or managers are also transparent in performing their roles (Rawlins, 2009). It is also important that employers provide honest feedback about employees' performance so they'll know their strengths and weaknesses (Bernstein, 2014). Consequently, as noted by Fung (2013) when the leader and other stakeholders of a workplace act in a transparent manner, the workplace benefit in several ways. The results may be evident in faster problem solving, better teamwork, healthy working relationships, trust and, ultimately, improved performance (Danker, 2013). Conversely, performance can suffer from a lack of workplace transparency which may hamper the achievement of corporate or organizational goals (Berggren & Bernstein, 2007).

A salient goal and performance indicator desirable in most contemporary organizations is innovation. However, innovation within an organization is characteristically linked with experimentation, hence a need for accountability of the innovation process. It is pertinent to state that accountability in this context lays emphasis on responsibility which has implications for liability and even culpability where failure or disappointment is involved (Centivany, 2016). Therefore, it could possibly seem odd to propose that workplace or organizational innovation should be closely associated with accountability (Patil et al., 2014). However, the concept of innovation accountability provides a combination and blend that can help arbitrate the intricacies and blockades existing in the innovation process in the workplace due to hierarchical routines. (Moonesinghe, 2016). Furthermore, innovation requires experimentation to be achieved, but it also needs a structure to be effective. Consequently, accountability provides the essential framework within which innovative ideas can flourish (Setiawan et al., 2017). This is consequent upon the fact that innovation accountability involves a process of empowerment and learning through accepting responsibility for both failures and successes. It is also characterized by

autonomy to make decisions at all levels within the organization in order to facilitate greater innovation output (Centivany, 2016). However, in order to foster innovation accountability corporate goals must be determined, openness and clarity of vital strategic goals and objectives must be established and the liberty and autonomy to make decisions at all levels within the organization must be present. Therefore, there is a propensity that adopting a culture of work transparency may foster innovation accountability within an organization.

Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H_0: Work transparency has no significant effect on innovation accountability.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was employed to gather information from employees of the selected university. Descriptive research design was used to describe the characteristics of the population based on the relationship proposed between workplace transparency and innovation accountability in the workplace. Survey was used as research method to enhance the determination of statistically significant results and the data collected were gotten through the administration of structured copies of questionnaire to both academic and non-academic staff of covenant university in Ogun State, Nigeria. Covenant university was selected based on the institution's embedded policy of work transparency and corporate culture of open innovation. The study population as gotten from the human resource department of the institution is stated as 1,126 employees. One hundred and ten (110) copies of questionnaire were administered based on multistage sampling technique (Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling) to both academic and non-academic staff of the institution based on the recommendations of Barlett et al. (2001). Covenant university as an institution was purposively selected and the employees were stratified into academic and non-academic staff. Simple random sampling was employed to select employees based on the two strata. Eighty-nine (89) copies of questionnaires representing about 81% were recovered. The study used regression as statistical tool for analysis to test the hypothesis stated.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

H_0: Workplace transparency does not affect innovation accountability.

Table 1
MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.416[a]	0.173	0.164	0.59820

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Transp.
Source: Field Study Result (2018).

Table 1 is the model summary. It shows the extent to which variance in the dependent variable variance (workplace transparency) is explained by the independent variable (innovation accountability). In this case, R value is .416 and the adjusted R square value is .164. The R square value is .173 expressed by a percentage, this means that our workplace transparency explains 17.3% of the variance in innovation accountability. The standard error of the estimate is

0.59820, which signifies the error term. This means that a unit increase in workplace transparency will lead to an increase in innovation accountability.

Table 2
ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.516	1	6.516	18.210	0.000[b]
	Residual	31.133	87	0.358		
	Total	37.649	88			

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Transparency.
b. Dependent Variable: Innovation Accountability.
Source: Field Study Result (2018).

Table 2 displays the assessment of the statistical significance of the result. The ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis to determine the statistical significance. From the results, the model appears to have a good fit, as shown by positive value F value which is given as 18.210. Similarly, the table exhibits a statistically significant relationship between workplace transparency and innovation accountability ($p<0.05$). The implication from the statistical result is that espousing a culture of workplace transparency in an organization will positively affect innovation accountability. Hence the null hypothesis would be rejected.

Table 3
COEFFICIENTS[a]

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.211	0.374		5.912	0.000
	Work Transp	0.405	0.095	0.416	4.267	0.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Innovation accountability.
Source: Field Study Result (2018).

Table 3 displays the model that shows the extent to which workplace transparency affect innovation accountability. The beta co-efficient associated with workplace transparency is 0.416. It depicts a noteworthy contribution in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. Hence, we can deduce that workplace transparency has a positive effect on innovation accountability at a significant level ($p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result from the analysis showed that adopting a culture of work transparency can motivate innovation accountability within an organization. This is in line with the study of Rawlins (2008) and Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014) who revealed that transparency in an organization has implications for employee trust and responsibility. This also extends the works of Carter (2014) and Boydell et al. (2017) who showed that workplace transparency has implications for accountability. One novel contribution of this study to literature is that most researches, on workplace transparency are usually associated with information sharing and the apparent quality of the information shared. However, this myopic focus of work place transparency on information and quality, overlooks the dynamics of workplace transparency. Therefore, this study argues that the concept of workplace transparency fosters innovation accountability which is imperative as the building block upon which workplace innovation

strategy can be reinforced in the workplace setting as observed in the case of Covenant university in Nigeria. This is consequent upon the fact that work transparency affords autonomy and fosters responsibility which improves overall motivation, speed, efficiency and ultimately the occurrence of innovation within an organization. In the same vein, when strategic goals are shared openly, hierarchy is erased and an open culture of engagement, ownership and innovativeness is fostered. Furthermore, organizations can respond positively and quickly to market changes when they are agile and are built on informed, empowered, proactive and innovative thinking individuals. This study concludes that work transparency motivates innovation accountability in the workplace, hence employers should adopt a culture of work transparency and on the other hand hold every employee accountable for initiating successful innovation within the organization. To this end, with particular emphasis on the workplace in Nigeria, this study recommends that organizational strategies should be openly and effectively communicated to individuals and teams to motivate operational autonomy, giving them the creative space required to generate ideas, engage in decision making and establish a strong execution process. A workplace culture of accountability in which employees feel empowered to take responsibility and have the poise to innovate should be created by top management. Management should ensure that key corporate goals are clear and transparent across the organization and managers should align with the same innovation strategy. This is consequent upon the fact that innovation will not be a sustainable, value driving component of any organization except the ultimate accountability is at the top. The chief executive officer must be the chief innovation officer of the workplace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

Bartlett, J.E., Kotrlik, J.W., & Higgins, C.C. (2001). Organizational research: Determining appropriate sample size in survey research. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, *19*(1), 43-50.

Berggren, E., & Bernstein, R. (2007). Organizational transparency drives company performance. *Journal of Management Development, 26*, 411-417.

Bernstein, E. (2014). The transparency trap. *Harvard Business Review, 92*(10), 58–66.

Centivany, A.L. (2016) *Understanding organizational responses to innovative deviance: A case study of Hathitrust.* PhD Thesis, University of Michigan.

Christensen, L.T., & Cheney, G. (2015). Peering into transparency: Challenging ideals, proxies, and organizational practices. *Communication Theory, 25*, 70-90.

Danker, M. (2013). Understanding stakeholder activism, managing transparency risk. In D. Crowther & G. Aras (Eds.), *The governance of risk* (pp.33-72). Bradford, UK: Emerald Group

Estlund, C. (2014). Extending the case for workplace transparency to information about pay. *UC Irvine Law Review, 4*, 781.

Florio, M., Pellegrin, J., & Sirtori, E. (2014). *Research intensive clusters and regional innovation systems: A case study of Mechatronics in Apulia*. Milan.

Fung, A. (2013). Infotopia: Unleashing the democratic power of transparency. *Politics & Society, 41*, 183-212.

Genus, A., & Stirling, A. (2018). Collingridge and the dilemma of control: Towards responsible and accountable innovation. *Research Policy, 47*, 61–69.

Gregory, T.C. (2016) Asian infrastructure investment bank: Governance innovation and prospects. *Global Governance, 22*(1), 11-26.

Mills, K.E, Han, Z., Robbins J., & Weary D.M (2018) Institutional transparency improves public perception of lab animal technicians and support for animal research. *PlosOne, 13*(2), E0193262.

Moonesinghe, S.R. (2016). Innovation good evaluation essential a plea for formal evaluation of new pathways of care and ways of working. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, *116*(2), 151–163.

Patil, S.V., Vieider, F., Tetlock, P.E. (2014) Process versus outcome accountability. In M. Bovens, R.E. Goodin, T. Schillemans (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*, (pp.69-89). Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Rawlins, B. (2009). Give the emperor a mirror: Toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 21*, 71-99.

Reuters. (2012). Social sciences citation index. Retrieved from http://ip-science. thomsonreuters.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi?PC=SS

Roberts, A. (2012). WikiLeaks: The illusion of transparency. *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 78*, 116-133.

Schaerer, M., Kern, M., Berger, G., Medvec, V., & Swaab, R.I., (2018). The illusion of transparency in performance appraisals: When and why accuracy motivation explains unintentional feedback inflation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 144*, 171-186.

Schnackenberg, A.K., & Tomlinson, E.C. (2014). Organizational transparency: A new perspective on managing trust in organization–Stakeholder relationships. *Journal of Management, 42*(7).

Setiawan, A.D., Singh, R., & Romijn, H.A. (2017). Embedding accountability throughout innovation process in the green economy: The need for an innovative approach. In T. Taufik, I. Prabasari, I. A. Rineksane, R. Yaya, R. Widowati, R. Putra, S. Riyadi, P. Harsanto (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sustainable Innovation, 17,* 147-158.

Wehmeier, S., & Raaz, O. (2012). Transparency matters. The concept of organizational transparency in the academic discourse. *Public Relation Inquiry, 1*, 337-366