



EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDINAL OUTCOMES

Tamunomiebi, M. D., & Onyeche, C. N.

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¹Tamunomiebi, M. D., & ²Onyeche, C. N.

¹Professor of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

²Doctoral Candidate, Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Accepted: March 2, 2022

ABSTRACT

Employee attitudinal outcomes are integral to the organization's stability and functional coherence. Such dispositions toward the organization and significant others are imperative for the health and overall cohesion of the workplace. This paper identified effective leadership as playing a crucial role in the perceptions and expectations of workers and thus impacting on employee attitudinal outcomes. The paper was designed as a theoretical paper, specifically structured to discuss the concepts of effective leadership (leadership focus, leadership communication, and leadership responsiveness) and employee attitudinal outcomes (employee job commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement) from a perspective premised within the contingency theory of leadership. Following the literature review, the paper identified leadership focus, communication, and responsiveness as enabling improved connectedness and relationship between leaders and their employees. Thus, this paper affirmed the link between effective leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes, especially given the imperatives of effective leadership features such as focus, communication, and responsiveness in advancing the necessary conditions which stimulate employee attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee job commitment, and job involvement.

Keywords: Employee attitudinal outcomes, effective leadership, contingency theory of leadership

CITATION: Tamunomiebi, M. D., & Onyeche, C. N. (2022). effective leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 9 (1), 610 – 621.

INTRODUCTION

The organization is a framework which houses and accommodates a variety of social actors and groups; all of which hold expectations and often interpret events differently. Their experiences and encounters within the organizational environment are such that also conditions their attitudes towards others, their roles, and the organization itself (Stone, 2014). Judge (2009) posited that attitudes affect the quality of work and one's relationship with others. This is because a dissatisfied worker tends to be difficult and can pose a problem for the organization. Employee attitudinal outcomes describe the various expressions of attitudes manifested by the worker. The findings from the study carried out by Madrigano et al., (2020) revealed that organizations have grown increasingly aware of the significance of managing employee attitude and are investing more time and effort than ever before to create the best attitude possible among their employees. Attitudinal outcomes may be positive or negative (Judge, 2009). Boateng and Hsieh further noted that when employees believe that management listens to their concerns, cares about them, and is willing to make some compromises, it goes a long way toward creating a positive atmosphere and positive attitudes amongst them. Wang, Wang, and Liu (2018) described employee attitudes as the various tendencies or inclinations of the worker; based on their interpretations or disposition toward issues or events within the workplace. Such affect the workers' openness toward collaboration, information sharing, and support for significant others in the organization. As such when attitudes are negative, their outcomes could be costly and detrimental for the organization.

Stayrinoudis and Simos (2016) in their research linked employee attitudinal outcomes to the work environment. Their research identified conditions such as reward, job security, and also physical workspace. Their view corroborates that of Fernandez and Moldogaszey (2013) who argued that employee attitudinal outcomes flow from the

nature of experiences by the worker such as their relationship with their supervisors, co-workers, and even the customers. According to Ogbonnaya, Daniels, and Nielsen (2017), attitudinal outcomes are such that emerge from the social context of the organization or workplace. Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) in their own study noted that the style of leadership is a basis for attitudinal outcomes. The author stated that particular leadership styles have unique effects on the attitudes of the workers, with some motivating them to be better and more inclined to support the organization's management including their co-workers, and others tending towards alienation and distrust within the workplace. This is as Kwizera, Osunsan, Irau, Wandiba, Abiria, and Bayo (2019) pointed out that employee attitudinal outcomes are more often based on the nature of workers' expectations and their interpretations of leadership actions or organizational policies. This follows Alblas and Wiisman's (2011) observation that most organizational factors flow from its leadership and to be effective as a leader, one must be able to develop and engage the workforce in a way that inspires and motivates them to perform better.

Effective leadership describes the capacity of the individual or group of individuals to coordinate and channel the resources of the organization toward its objectives (Mark, 2006). This requires motivation, control, and the capacity to direct followership. Moreso, it requires the structuring conditions that enrich the experiences of workers and that way stimulates favourable dispositions and attitudes toward the leader and other members of the organization (Awuor and Kamau, 2015; Mansaray, 2019). Related research has not substantially addressed the role of effective leadership in employee attitudinal outcomes. This gap stems from the poor number of studies that have addressed the conceptualization of effective leadership from a situational or contingent perspective rather than emphasizing particular styles or traits. As a departure from previous studies, this paper discussed the relationship

between effective leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes. In considering measures for employee attitudinal outcomes, scholars have evaluated thousands of attitudes, OB research focuses on a very limited number of work-related attitudes that tap positive or negative evaluations employees hold about their work environments. Much of the research, according to Moynihan and Pandey, (2007) has been centered on three attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment. Whereas Buah and Akudugu, (2020) conclude that employee attitude is directly influenced by their job satisfaction, job involvement, job commitment,

organizational justice, job security, motivation, and many more. The study carried out by Buah and Akudugu, (2020) expanded on the work of Moynihan and Pandey, (2007) in identifying work-related attitudes. Therefore, for the purpose of this nonempirical study, we adapt employee job commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement as the measures of employee attitudinal outcomes. The discussion is premised on the contingency theory of leadership, thus shifting emphasis to effectiveness as an aspect of leadership based on the appropriateness and suitability of leadership approaches within various situations and contexts.

Conceptual Framework

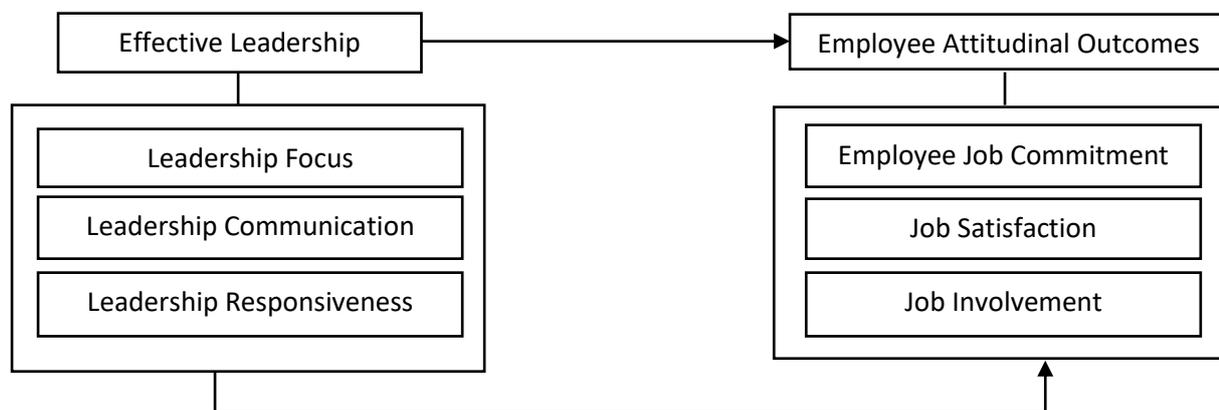


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Effective Leadership and Employee Attitudinal Outcomes

Source: Researcher's Desk (2022), with Dimensions adapted from Ganta and Manokunda (2014) and measures adapted from Buah and Akudugu, (2020).

Purpose and objectives of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relationship between effective leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes. The objectives of this paper are to:

- Examine the link between leadership focus and employee attitudinal outcomes
- Ascertain the link between leadership communication and employee attitudinal outcomes
- Determine the link between leadership responsiveness and employee attitudinal outcomes

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contingency Theory of Leadership

The contingency theory of leadership was propounded by Joan Woodward in 1958 (cited in Nakodia, 2012) who identified flexibility and technology as key factors in determining leadership effectiveness. The theory was later modified and clarified by Fiedler in 1993 who argued that the personality of the leader as well as the situation or context, play major roles in the leader's capacity for followership and effective coordination (Nakodia, 2012). Recent studies have also continued to improve on the content and tenets of the theory

(Nakodia, 2012; Peretomode, 2012), with focus advancing a view which stresses more on the leader's ability to adapt and apply themselves in ways that match the functional as well as relationship gaps in each situation. Thus, effective leadership as prescribed by the contingency theory of leadership is such that emerges from the context and so effectiveness is defined or determined by the leaders "fitting" with the context or situation. Hence effectiveness is relative, and unique to each situation. Mansaray (2019) reiterated the views of Mark (2006) in stating that leadership is a social action and as such is primarily about the people or followers; however, given the differences and unique background of peoples, their culture, historical development, and social values, interpretations and expectations differ across a variety of contexts – and so must leadership if it is to be considered effective in advancing the required employee attitudinal outcomes.

Effective Leadership

Leadership is defined as the ability to influence a group of employees' values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014). A leader with strong leadership skills can easily motivate and influence the employees of the organization and apply effective changes to the organization. Organizational change is a 'no-show' if effective leadership is absent (Northouse, 2004). The reason behind this is that there are no leaders that motivate and lead the organization's employees as well as provide clear direction for the organization (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). According to Bass (cited in Northouse, 2004), leaders must become the change agent in promoting change by creating vision. The created vision on the other hand must be clearly defined, understandable and attainable.

Leaders must possess a clear understanding of the strategic objectives for their organization, identify actions needed to achieve the objectives, and conduct an analysis of the organizations existing ideologies (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). The role of leading changes and advancing the objectives of the organization is in a leaders' hands. Leaders help

people to develop necessary skills to facilitate them in coping with the needs in an organization (Awuor & Kamau, 2015). An effective and strategic leader must be attentive towards the formulation, implementation, and sustaining of the change efforts. In this twenty-first century with the vast technological advancement, in order to make organizations gain a competitive advantage over their competitors, organizations should be more adaptive to change. Northouse (2004) believes that the required restructuring and responsiveness to the organization's market or environment can only be achieved through effective organizational leadership.

Leadership is a kind of power where one person has the ability to influence or change the values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes of another person (Ganta, and Manukonda, 2014). A person with strong leadership ability will be a good example or role model to their employees because the leader who is able to effectively achieve some good result or achievement gains the trust and admiration of their employees, and inadvertently changes their values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes, for mimicry is the sincerest form of flattery (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). This follows Northouse's (2004) observation that leaders who possess strong leadership have the strength to influence others to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Other than that, there is also another way to define a leader that is effective. Hence a defining characteristic of effective leaders is that they give a clear direction or focus to their employees, and also lead their employees to commit to their jobs and to work as a group to achieve the organization's goals and objectives (Wasim & Imran, 2010). This also tells us that good leader usually have a clear vision for the company and therefore can easily identify the problems and obstacles that currently stand between them and the aims of the organization. In this way, they are able to effectively and efficiently bring about the necessary reforms that will bring the company into the future while keeping abreast with contemporary changes in the business world.

Effective leaders have their style changing depending upon the situation. This can be justified by taking democratic or participative leadership style how should act in case of crises, where they are required to play a directive leadership style. On the contrary poor leaders change their leadership style randomly where their followers get confused to speculate their leadership style. Further effective leaders also change their leadership style depending upon team members' characteristics. This assists to consider and act according to the real situation of the followers. Some prefer to be part of decision making while others need direction. Effective leaders result from experience, hard work, intelligence, and a host of other factors (Burke and Cooper, 2006).

Effective leadership is also the ability to improve productivity in the workplace through the ability to influence employees. Accordingly, an effective leader is one who inspires others to give maximum contribution to achieving the business goal. In the process, effective leaders are not using force to influence others in doing their jobs, rather inspire them to do what is needed to be done. Mark (2006) described effectiveness as the ability to achieve high productivity. Hughes et al. (2007) indicated admitting a leader's behavior or personality traits play a key role in examining the consequences or impact of these behaviors to make judgments about the relative success of a leader. They further noted as out of the vast number of measures to demark successful and unsuccessful leaders the commonly used as a superior's effectiveness or promotion ratings, subordinates' ratings of their job satisfaction and moral or of their leaders' effectiveness, and different work-unit performance indices. Superior rate their leader on different measurements considered by the organization as important, namely focus, communication, and also the capacity for responsiveness.

Leadership focus: This dimension describes the leader's capacity for consistency and coherence in channeling the organizations' human resources toward the attainment of clearly specified goals and

objectives. Focus with regard to leadership Northouse (2004) involves the leader's ability to also sell and motivate the subordinates to adopt and support its pursuit of stated objectives. Ganta and Manukonda (2014) argued that focus offers the organization direction and ensures members are unified and are in agreement when it comes to their actions and functions. Effective leadership is reflected in the development and specification of a clear vision and direction for the organization. such creates meaning for the daily activities and operations of the organization as it establishes an overall goal that helps in the streamlining of organizational operations, policies, and functions (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014; Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

Leadership communication: The dimension of effective leadership, which is communication, borders on the leader's capacity to interact and exchange valuable information or messages with subordinates in the organization. communication is imperative for collaboration and the overall harmony of the organization (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014). This is because it facilitates a process of cohesion through informed actions and shared interpretations of the organization's realities. Ganta and Manukonda (2014) described leadership communication as a bridging of the various expectations and interpretations of what the leader expects and the intended actions of the leadership. However, within the context of effective leadership, communication details the overall flow of information on planned actions and decisions as well as feedback from the workers – it is as such one that can be described as necessary for synchronizing the various units and levels in the workplace (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014; Northouse, 2014).

Leadership responsiveness: Leader responsiveness, which is the third dimension of effective leadership, describes the capacity of leadership to adapt its features and qualities in ways that enable the leader to function more effectively. () described each social relationship as unique and has its own

character, distinct from those of others; thus, effective leadership is such that is able to reconfigure its actions, style, and behavior to suit and address the gaps apparent within its context. Responsiveness thus describes the fluidity of leadership actions and the extent to which it is able to transform itself and align its styles with the existing values of its market or environment. () argued that responsive leadership is such that emphasizes various forms of competencies – most dominant amongst which include the social, emotional, contextual, and cultural competencies.

Employee Attitudinal Outcomes

For organizations to be competitive, employees must develop a close networking relationship while performing daily operations (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). In a typical business operation, the creation of memorable experiences for the customer should be the goal of every employee. Despite the recognized need for departments to work together, often negative behavior by some employees such as tardiness results in guests being disappointed by having to wait to be served at different touchpoints of service. If there is a communication gap between supervisors and frontline staff such as prioritization of particular responsibilities or actions, it may lead to functional disparity and impact negatively on the organizations' processes.

Other observable forms of negative employee attitudinal behavior which affect organizations' competitiveness include employees' emphasis on exaggerating the seriousness of other staff mistakes, especially from different departments, instead of directing their efforts in working together to achieve a common goal of creating memorable customer experiences (Stone, 2014; Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2019). Therefore, understanding employees' attitudes are critical in identifying, analysing, and comprehending factors that impact the way different employees react to different operational situations at work (Wanza & Nkuraru, 2016; Judge, 2009).

According to Judge (2009), attitudes manifest in three ways: cognition, affect, and behavior. Cognition involves making sense of the situation and describing how it seems. For instance, an employee asserting that the pay at the organization where she or he works is low is a description of the situation. And, the description of the situation (cognition) determines how one will be influenced by it. The second aspect, also known as the affect, is the emotional reaction towards the cognition and reflects how one feels about the situation that has been described. For instance, where one asserts that the pay at one's organization is low, and they dislike working in the organization. The cognition of the situation leads to a certain feeling, which in this case is dissatisfaction. Finally, the third aspect is the behavioral outcome which is motivated by emotion. For example, where the pay at one's organization is low, and they dislike working, and therefore, they decide to also not give their best effort. The preceding examples help to address the complexity of attitudes which aids in the understanding of individual employee job behavior (Judge, 2009).

Robbins and Judge (2014) posit that attitudinal outcomes are shaped by peoples' perception of, rather than the actual, reality – the reason why individuals often look at the same thing and perceive it differently. This outcome can be attributed to three main factors: the perceiver, the target, and the situation which influence an individual's perception of reality and determine their behavior. When the perceiver encounters a certain situation, their perception is influenced by their personal characteristics, attitude, reasons, past experiences, and beliefs. For instance, if an employee expects the managers to be arrogant based on past experiences, they may perceive the next manager as such without even meeting them.

The “target” describes the characteristics of an individual and how they influence his/her perceptions. For instance, the most vocal employees are more likely to be noticed in a group of shy individuals. In this case, the perceiver might see the vocal employees as potential team leaders

or they could also perceive them as obnoxious, based on their personal characteristics as a perceiver (Robbins & Judge, 2014). Lastly, the “situation” provides the time, conditions, and location that surrounds an event that influences the attention of the perceiver. If an employee has to attend briefings every morning at 8 o’clock and he/she knows that there are traffic jams except on Thursdays. They would have to wake up an hour earlier on Thursdays to make it on time. Therefore, having to wake up an hour earlier on Thursdays would change their perception about morning briefings on Thursdays because of the different circumstances (Robbins & Judge, 2014).

Unlike Robbins and Judge (2014), Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede (2002) argue that attitudinal outcomes are influenced by observations and interpretations. The main attribute that one needs to cultivate when interacting with other people is the ability to distinguish between observations and interpretations. Employees need to understand that sometimes what they see does not reflect what they think it means. Different signs, body language, and behaviors have different meanings across the globe, which is why not everything that one observes reflects one's interpretation accurately. It is imperative that one keep in mind that a person's understanding of a situation is based on their own environment and experiences. Sometimes, to make the right interpretation of a certain situation, one needs to neglect past experiences and see things from a different perspective.

Alblas and Wijsman (2011) have a different opinion: that employee attitudinal outcomes can be attributed to emotional commitment. The level of devotion that workers have towards their organization determines the way they behave. Employees that are not committed to their organization find it harder to deliver what is expected of them, let alone go the extra mile to make things happen. In addition, employees' behavior is determined by how the employer

invests in the employees to ensure their satisfaction (Stone, 2014).

Employee job commitment: The measure of commitment is concerned with the extent to which workers or employees in the workplace are involved and affectionate about the goals and objectives of the organization. Commitment as an employee attitudinal outcome reflects the workers' dedication toward their roles and workplace responsibilities. As a positive employee attitudinal outcome, commitment determines the workers' focus and consistency in their role. It also influences the workers' relationship with other members of the organization. Judge (2009) identified employment commitment as a favorable attitudinal outcome that indicates the value workers place on their roles and on the organization itself. Hence it is a desirable and preferred quality of the organization as it suggests strong attachment and positive affection towards one's role, co-workers, and the organization as well (Wanza & Nkuraru, 2016).

Job satisfaction: This measure of employee attitudinal outcomes addresses the extent to which the worker or employee is contented and happy with their conditions surrounding their work or functions in the organization. Satisfaction according to Robbins and Judge (2014) is subjective and in most cases emerges from the expectations and individualized interpretation of experiences by the worker. However, studies over the years have narrowed related factors upon which satisfaction issues have increasingly bordered. These include the various forms of reward systems, growth opportunities, workplace relationships, and various organizational policies that shape and define the nature of work and interactions between workers in the organization. It also advances meaning and a sense of fulfillment to the worker. Job satisfaction is therefore critical in advancing healthy and more sustainable systemic organizational features as workers tend to be more attuned to the needs and concerns of their co-workers within the workplace (Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2019).

Job Involvement: This measure of employee attitudinal outcome refers to a state of psychological identification with work or the degree to which a job is central to a person's identity. Job involvement has been defined as the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self-image, furthermore, as the degree to which a person's work performance affects his self-esteem (Rottenberry & Moberg, 2007). Empirical evidence yields that more involvement in a job means a person is fully enjoying his job (Brown, 1996). The relationship between job involvement, employee satisfaction, and a firm's success is widely discussed in past studies (Diefendorff et al., 2002; Igbaria, Parasuraman, & Badawy, 1994; Riipinen, 1997: cited in Rana, Malik, & Hussain, 2016).

Mester, Visser, Roodt, and Kellerman (2003) found a significant relationship of transactional leadership style with organizational commitment. Atta and Khan (2015) found that both transformational and transactional leadership styles were positive predictors for organizational citizenship behavior. However, along with employees' commitment and self-efficacy, positive leadership styles also cast an impact on the overall efficacy of the institute, commitment, and mission of the society (Antonakis & House, 2002; Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003; Ross & Gray, 2006; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008; Waldman, Bass, & Yammarino, 1990: cited in Rana, Malik, & Hussain, 2016).

Effective Leadership and Employee Attitudinal Outcomes

Leadership effectiveness is all about attaining desirable outcomes like more output with less input which implies high productivity, and quality that result in satisfaction. According to Northouse (2004), an effective leader is required to walk the talk, where what he does and what he says is consistent. It is during such a condition, that subordinates develop trust in their leader. As a result, once the confidence is built on the leader then the support, motivation, and adherence to the leadership will develop resulting in desirable or

positive employee attitudinal outcomes. Identifying and internalizing factors affecting leadership effectiveness is important for the successful leader of any organization.

In discussing effectiveness, the question that comes to mind is why is one individual preferred over another by followers when it comes to the choice of a leader? It is the answer to this question, such as the preferred qualities (drawing on the expectations of subordinates) that determine the effectiveness of the leader. Kouzes and Posner (cited in Iqbal, et al 2017) surveyed over 75,000 people around the globe for more than two decades in identifying what people look for in their leaders. Their study identified qualities such as focus, forward-looking, communication, competence, and motivation as the dominant factors. This is because a leader exercising these qualities displays substantial influence on his followers.

Studies have also suggested that a positive employee attitude is achieved through many ways such as good pay (Ogbonnaya, Daniels & Nielsen, 2017; Obiero, 2018), training and development that facilitates employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill the businesses objectives (Fletcher, Alfes & Robinson, 2018). Wikhamn (2019) emphasized the role of innovative and sustainable human resource management that develops employee competence in numerous ways as a means of imparting commitment, the result of which can be seen in the employee's improved performance. Organizational support has been documented to influence employee attitudinal outcomes in several ways (Kwizera, et al 2019). Effective compensation strategies have also been pointed out as a practice that creates increased commitment through compensating the employees in line with their superior performance, using both financial and non-financial means (Ogbonnaya, Daniels & Nielsen, 2017).

Similarly, communication gives all employees a voice within the organization, which enables each employee to understand what is expected in

regards to their responsibilities and organizational mission statement. A good or positive employee attitude will enable employees to offer good service with a feeling of belongingness (King et al 2013). The factors that influence employee attitude include employee empowerment (Stavrinoudis & Simos, 2016), quality leadership (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016), and work-life balance (Iqbal, et al 2017). Employee trust is influenced by many factors, among which is the leader's capacity to connect with the employees, likewise, other factors such as inclusivity and empathy (Thanabordeekij, 2018) can influence how the employee feels about their work and the prestige attached to it. All these influence the level of attitude of employees in the organization and these actually work hand in hand (Namuleme, et al 2020).

To summarize, one finds that effective leadership is not premised on any particular style, trait, approach, or technique; rather it is contingent and adjusts in line with the requirement of its environment. This quality is important for addressing the expectations of its followers and employees. Thus, one could describe effective leadership as integral and imperative to the success and overall wellbeing of the organization. This is as it promotes healthier relationships and advances work features that drive and bring out the best in the employees of the organization. Effectiveness is thus achieved when the leader is able to connect with and motivate the workers in ways that enhance their perceptions of the leader and their co-workers as well. In this vein, one finds that effective leadership specifically contributes toward employee attitudinal outcomes in the following ways:

- Through focus, leaders can clarify the organization's vision and in that manner

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determine the various ways or approaches through which it can apply its human capital in ways that are meaningful, healthy, and considerate of the workers' wellbeing.

- Through communication, leaders can understand and effectively engage their employees; bridging differences in expectations and ensuring that there is a shared sense of direction and purpose in the organization
- Through responsiveness, leaders can flow with the nature of change and emerging issues that are evident in their workplace; advancing creative solutions toward the gaps in the relationships and ensuring that the workers' needs are met

CONCLUSION

Employee attitudes reflect the disposition of the worker towards co-workers and the organization. Hence it affects relationships and the extent to which the organization is cohesive in its behavior or features. However, employee attitudinal outcomes can be considered as a consequence of the organization's leadership. This is because as social actors, leaders play key roles in the development, management, and coordination of the organization's resources (human, financial, and material). Their actions can be considered as the pivot in motivating workers' attitudes and ensuring their values are coherent and that of the organization. Thus, this paper affirms the link between effective leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes, especially given the imperatives of effective leadership features such as focus, communication, and responsiveness in advancing the necessary conditions which stimulate employee job commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement.

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