A holistic model of organizational cynicism, cronyism and ingratiation

Yasir Hayat Mughal
Assistant Professor
College of Public Health and Health Informatics, Al-Bukayriyah
Qassim University, Al-Qassim, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4102-5952
E-mail: hbl_rulz@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explain the unique role of organizational cynicism, cronyism and ingratiation by delving into knowledge from different theories and models. To understand cynicism, cronyism and ingratiation is tricky as it seems to be tangled and fragmented in all disciplines. The aim of this study was to introduce a new model for management researchers. In this study the researcher has discussed organizational cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation between employee and managers. Cronyism means favoritism given by a superior to a subordinate. Ingratiation means impression management, and different tactics used by members to get the favour of superiors, and cynicism means the negative attitude of individuals towards organizations. In-group members enjoys benefits from managers while outgroup members do not get the same treatment in the workplace. In this paper the researcher has discussed antecedents of organizational cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation along with consequences thereof. An extensive literature review was conducted to stimulate pertinent descriptive information on organizational cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation. Major focus was given to in-depth understanding of attribute and consequencies of these negative attitudes. Publications in the form of theses, articles, review papers were used for extensive review of literature. A new holistic model has been introduced in this paper for future researchers. This model needs empirical testing and will possibly open new doors of research in organizational settings. Management of organizations can take advantage of the study by reducing organizational cronyism, cynicism and also focus on the employees who are involved in ingratiation i.e. impression management. Future researchers may use this model in their academic theses for possible new theoretical additions in their studies.

Keywords: Organizational cronysim, organizational cynicism, favoritism, ingratiation, poverty, leaders.

Introduction

The word cynicism is greek word and it means that it is not possible to find really honest people in the world. Researchers found that in almost all organizations there are at least a few people who are cynical. This concept was overlooked in the research and it was first used in management studies in 1998. Though this concept was used in 1968 in organizational settings it came about decades later. Dean et al., (1998;1) was first to use the term. The words cynicism and skepticism are used but always confused researchers. There are a few individuals who face this attitude i.e. cynicism (Grzeskowiak & Al-Khatib, 2009; 2). Rude behavior, ignorance, are some of the sources and reasons for cynicism. Bernerth, Armenakis, Field and Walker (2007; 3) argued that lack of commitment, lack of resources, increased job demands are sources of cynical behavior and 'bad' attitudes. Cynicism gave rise to these negative behaviors. Unethical behavior, unethical climate, injustice also make the employees cynical (Nicolaides and Duho, 2019; Nicolaides, 2015; Dean et al., 1998:1). This attitude is harmful for employee as well as organizations. A cynical attitude brings depression, burnout and emotional exhaustion among individuals. Those people who have cynical attitudes tends to have more inclination towards participating in unethical and disloyal

behavior (Bakker, 2007: 4). MacCarthy and Garavan (2007:5) indicated that organizations must be aware about these cynical behavior employees and formulate strategies to reduce this kind of negative and adverse attitude.

Definitions of Occupational Cynicism

This is a negative attitude of employees to their organization that usually lacks integrity and leads to negative effect towards the workplace. This attitude resuts in frustration, distrust of group, individual or persons. Cynical persons think that there is no justice, no ethics and no equality in organization (Stanley, Meyer & Topolnytsky, 2005: 6). Neiderhoffer (1967: 7) conducted a study on police officers to investigate occupational cynicism. He developed and validated the instrument to measure the cynicism level but it got a lot of criticism but his study gave new insights for cynicism in organizational settings and researchers attention was again shifted to occupational cynicism.

Employee Cynicism

Injustice, inequality and unfair policies of management may lead to negative behaviors called employee cynicism. The main factor of employee cynicism is pay practices. In developed and developing countries there is gap between the managerial class and ordinary workers. Organizations have elite class managers and also have generally sidelined workers. It is often difficult for workers to make ends meet and their cynicism grows.
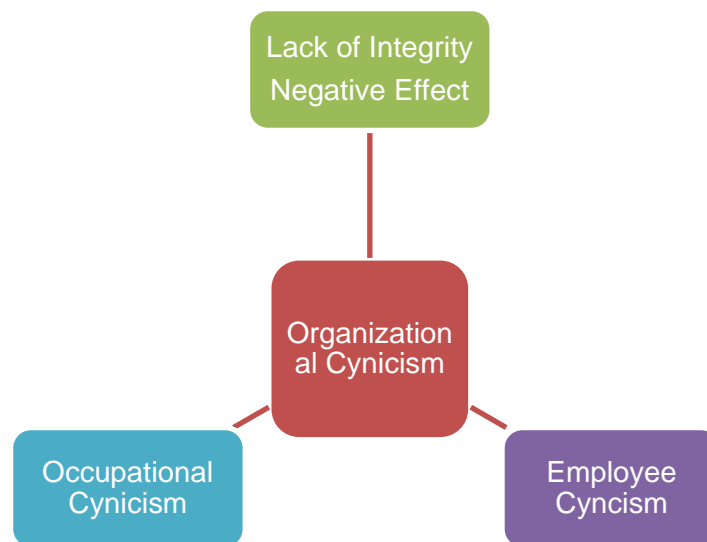

Figure 1. Model for Organizational Cynicism

Proposition 1: Occupational cynicism, employee cynicism, lack of integrity and negative effect will have positive relation with organizational cronyism.

Ingratiation

This is also called impression management. These types of techniques are used and adopted by employees to win the confidence and trust of management to get benefits for promotion, performance appraisal, good relationships with seniors, managers and leaders etc. The employees want to show their good image to their seniors or managers. Managers give some

benefits to some favorite employees and as a response employees are involved in ingratiation tactics. This is also called an influential strategy to become a good person in the eyes of leaders. Impression management has other dimenions such as self-promotion, intimidation etc. and this management style is useful in attaining desired results for performance appraisal. Ingratiation happens between two groups. One is called the actor group and the second is called a target group. Ingratiation is divided into four categories: self presentation, opinion conformity, other enhancement and self depreciation.

Self-Presentation

In this style of management employees want to develop a good image in the eyes of the leader or manager. They try to send messages to managers and leaders that they are very punctual, they come on time and leave the office on time. They are actively involved in affairs of the organization and complete their tasks well on time.

Opinion Conformity

This group is called the 'yes sir' group or 'yes man' board. Inspite of having the different views on decisions of management they only say yes to their target group (Bolino, Long &Turnley, 2016;8).

Other Enhancement

In this style, employees try to appreciate others for positive comments and show that the target person or group is all and in all, and they are doing everything right without errors (Bolino, Long &Turnley, 2016).

Self Depreciation

In this the actor i.e. the employee degrades his/her self to praise others (Bolino, Long &Turnley, 2016;8). This is one concept which is also related with ingratiation. It is also called upward inspirational tactics. In some cultures especially China exchanging of gifts, helping, are other forms of ingratiation. Employees get involved in ingratiation because they received favours from their leaders so this pushes them in ingratiation management.
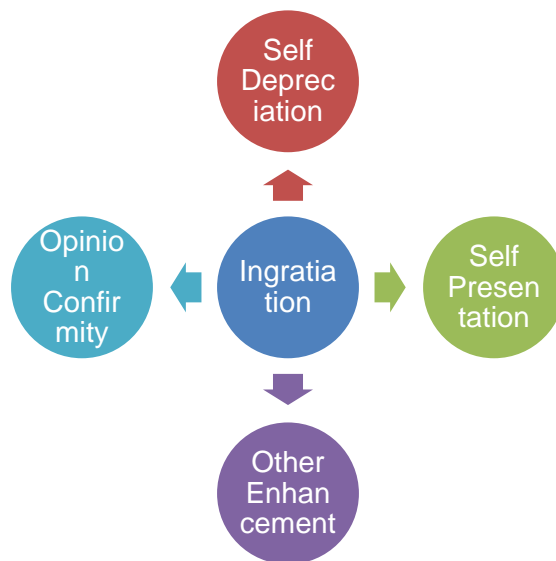

Figure 2. Model of Ingratiation or Impression Management

Proposition 2: Self Presentation, self-depreciation, opinion conformity and other enhancement will be positively associated with ingratiation.

Organizational Cronyism

The term 'crony' emerged from the Greek work "Khronios" meaning long-term (Shaheen, 2017). The Oxford dictionary defines this word as a friendship over a long time. In 1984 cronyism was used in organizational contexts for the very first time and it was explained that cronyism is to have passion to make friendships. In 1952 in the United States when the administration of President Truman was alleged to be bestowing benefits to their relatives, political cronyism was the used term. The concept of cronyism was thus linked with favoritism and nepotism. Organizations also have a negative attitude towards cronyism. People support each other in unethical affairs, having flexible promotion policies, flexible working hours, benefits etc. Organizational cronyism takes place at horizontal and vertical levels in organizations. At the horizontal level it consists of friends, colleagues, peer group, business partners while vertical cronyism takes place downward or upward in organizations. In downward cronyism this takes place between manager-employee relationships while also upward from employee-manager. Cronyism is a negative attitude and it effects the behavior of individuals in organizations. According to Khatri and Tsang (2003) loyalty has 2 attributes: emotions and behavior. Emotions emerge from true heartfelt gratitude but as emotions are invisible, it is thus measured by one's behaviour. Behaviour has two dimensions one emerges from true hearted behaviour while the other emerges from impression management i.e. ingratiation as discussed above.

Antecedents Of Cultural Cronyism

Particularism

There are two main antecedent of cronyism, one is particularism and the second is paternalism. In particularism there is another opposite concept, namely universalism. Particularism exists in collectivist cultures and people are treated, handled and controlled on the basis of groups to which they belong (Khatri & Tsang, 2003). While in universalism, rules are uniform for all. According to Max Weber these organizations which implement universalistic organizatioanal practices are mere bureaucracies (Khatri & Tsang, 2003). In these organizations selection, hiring, promotion is done on an impersonal assessment, no favor is given to anybody, bureaucracy follows just objectivew and is merit based.

Paternalism

On other side, paternalism is close to power distance. In paternalism those employees who have less power agree to accept that distribution of power is not equal in their organizations. The purpose of accumulating power is to gain control of all the resources in organizations, will likely lead to one becoming more powerful. In high power distance cultures, employees are not involved in any decision making processes and leaders in paternalistic cultures do not justify their opinions openly.

Ingroup Bias

Under the cloak of formal official relationships there is very strong personal and social relationship among members when they come closer to each other. Therefore, social informal relationships are formed to meet the needs of jobs which are not possible in formal official relationships (Furnham, 1997; Khatri & Tsang, 2003). Another essential point is that these informal

relationships help one to gain more power and become more influential in the organization. Trice and Byer (1993) explained cliques are formed out of informal relationships i.e. ingroups. That's why this formation of ingroup and outgroup results in favoritism. Ingroup employees have more benefits than outgroups employees (Vecchio, 1997).

Unreserved Personal Loyalty

Patrons rewarded their favorites without any abilities and expect loyalty in return so that they may exercise more power and expand their circle of power for long term use. According to Redding (1990), he pointed out that in some cultures loyalty to supervisors plays an effective role when compared to loyalty to organizations. It brings about needed change in the behavior of individuals. In addition Chi (1999) called these employees 'chin-shin', and they they are ingroup employees and show true-hearted gratitude to managers and in turn prove their unreserved loyalty towards managers.

Figure 3. Model of Organizational Cronyism

Proposition 3: Vertical, horizontal, ingroup, particularism, paternalism and unreserved personal loyalty will be positively related with organizational cronyism.
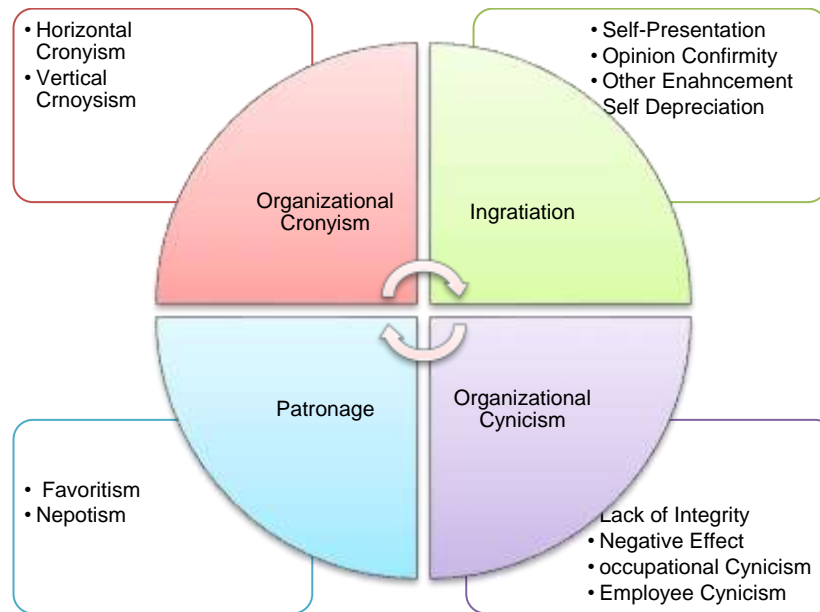

Figure 4. Model of Negative Attitudes in Organizations with attributes

Consequences

Cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation have some consequences for individuals and organizations alike. In this section the researcher discusses how these negative atttitudes of employees affect organizational change, leadership effectiveness, employees performance, job satisfaction and ultimately, employee commitment.

Organizational Change

The majority of change plans failed due to ineffective leadership. It is believed that leadership is as important for bringing change but the importance of followers cannot be ignored. If followers are not motivated and convinced to adopt change processes, no change plan will ever be successful (Khan, Busari, Abdullah & Mughal, 2018; Rao & Zaidi, 2020). As discussed above in-group employees are involved in ingratiation and cronyism and are those people who enjoy benefits and priviliges from their leaders. These employees are motivated to bring change when compared to out-group employees which are kept at a distance from important decisions and benefits. On the other hand, out-group employees are cynical and have negative attitudes towards management, administration and the organization. They think there is unethical practice and injustice in the environment of their organizations. Thus they have a negative attitude towards change processes.

Proposition 4: Ingroup members are highly motivated towards change than out-group members.

Leadership Effectiveness

Yukl (2002) describe leadership effectiveness as aims, followers and groups. Effectiveness of leaders can be evaluated through these three dimensions. If a leader is effective enough to motivate the employees and align organizational and individual objectives then he or she is believed to be an effective leader. Virtue and morality assist in making a business honorable and relate to quality management and promote sustainability (Nicolaides, 2015; 2019). There must be an equity theory implemented by leaders. But the ingroup members are very close to leaders so they enjoy more benefits from them leader who is viewed as being more effective but this is not so for outgroup employees (Busari, 2011; Khaola, 2019).

Proposition 5a: Cronyism, ingratiation for ingroup members will be positively related with leadership effectiveness,

Proposition 5b: For outgroup members cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation will be negatively related with leadership effectiveness.

Employee Performance

Employee performance is the main issue and challenge for every organization, and performance can be measure by productivity, absenteeism, quality of work, etc. It is effected by a number of factors, low job satisfaction, low level of commitment, cronyism, ingratiation and cynicism. Cronyism, ingratiation and cynicism brings negative outcomes among individuals. Performance of ingroup employees is satisfactory in the eyes of leaders, managers and supervisors but in reality it is actually not so (Mukhezakule, 2019).

They only use impression management and self presentation tactics to show their high performance. So cronyism, ingratiation and cynicism are negatively related with employee performance (Abdullah, Salman, & Ahmed, 2019; Khan, Mughal & Khattak, 2017).

Proposition 6: Organizational cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation are negatively related with employee performance.

Job Satisfaction

Ingroup employees are close to managers and show high gratitude towards their supervisors. They have strong social bonds with their superiors and so they are considered highly satisfied in their work and job as compared to their ourgroup members (Khatri & Tsang, 2003). According to Cheng (1999) promotion procedure is easy for ingroup members they enjoy flexible working hours and also enjoy interesting and challenging work/assignments. But the level of job satisfaction is found low among outgroup members, stress, depression and anxiety levels are considered to be high among outgroup members.

Proposition 7a: Ingroup members have high job satisfaction than outgroup members.

Proposition 7b: Cronyism, ingratiation and cynicism will be negatively related with job satisfaction for outgroup members.

Organizational Outcomes

According to Khatri and Tsang (2003) those employees who are involved in ingratiation show high gratitude towards supervisors and their commitment level for managers is higher but not for organizations. Their loyalty for their immediate boss is more than that for the orgnaization. Based on this perception Chen and Francesco (2000) argued that employees are hired and rewarded on the basis of leaders likes and dislikes, so commitment of employees towards organizations supersede the commitment level of employees for supervisors (Khanta & Srinuan, 2019).

Proposition 8: Organizational commitment will be negatively related with cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation

Research Methods

Content Analysis and Meta Analysis

Content analysis was first introduced in 1940s but later on it was used in academic work by the majority of researchers. Later on, content analysis was taken as strong analysis technique for qualitative data. There are criticisms on content analysis but it is still used in the qualitative studies. For content analysis data must be in a contextual form, and the contextual data must be read by the researcher again and again for transforming contextual data into categories. In developing categories the researche codes all the categories. Though purpose of the coding is applied to all contextual data and main aim of coding is to extract accurate and exact information from the contextual data and by doing so, a large amount of data is reduced to meaningful information. That information can be used for further inferences and statistical analysis.

Content analysis used for literature review requires coding of manifest and latent content. In review studies coding is helpful to reduce data and researchers may be able to present data in tables and figures. Narrative and discourse analysis were used for coded data in the literature

review. For the literature review, the Delphi technique and meta analysis may be used techniques. The Delphi technique is time consuming and the involvement of experts made it difficult for the researcher. Meta analysis is the mostly used technique for data reduction and critical review of literature.

In content analysis data collection, coding, analysis and interpretation are involved. The researcher downloaded published articles, thesis from impact factor journals and repositories of universities. Data was collected form the 1990s to 2019. Different filtering techniques were applied for data reduction. Those articles and review papers which were not published in the web of science and scopus were excluded from the study. A second filter was used to exclude those articles which belong to the political science area. Thus the researcher reduced the number of articles and only those articles were used in this study which had a management and business background.

The present study used literature reviews from past studies. These studies were in published articles, reviews and empirical papers, as well as doctoral theses. Most of the articles were published in the web of science clarivate analytics. Also articles from impact factor journals were included in this study. Published material was taken from 1990s to 2019. So readers will have a deep understanding of cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation. For the literature review content analysis and meta analysis techniques were used to extract data.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study we tried to introduce the propositions for organizational cronyism, cynicism, and ingratiation. In prior research Khatri and Tsang (2003), only gave propositions for organizational cronyism but in this study cynicism and ingratiation were also included. It is concluded that in every organization two groups prevail i.e. ingroup and outgroup. Ingroup members show those attitudes which have the favour of managers. So outgroup members have to exhbit those attitudes, behaviors which are liked by superiors so that they get desired results. Moreover, individual and organizational outcomes are also discussed in this study. Job satisfaction, performance, change process and effectiveness of leaders are serious challeneges for organizations. But for ingroup members these are not a problem when compared to outgroup members. So research questions i.e. equity theory needs to be tested empiricaly as to whether equity theory fails in these organizations or not? Because when cronyism, ingratiation and cynicism enter into the organizational structures, the performance of individuals and organizations will be effected negatively, thus impacting organizational sustainability adversely.

Alternative of Cronyism, Cynicism and Ingratiation

It is not necessary that all the above fators may present in the organizations. Presence of any one factor will leade to the negative outcomes. The presence of ingratiation or cronyism will automatically lead to organizational cynicism. Also self preservation, self depreciation, other enhancement, favoritism, may lead to cynical behavior and it will effect job satisfaction, performance and commitment levels of employees. Ingroup members do not enjoy benefits the on basis of their competence only, but also use impression management tactics for receiving rewards form management.

Figure 5. Model of Organizational Cronyism, Cynicism and Ingratiation
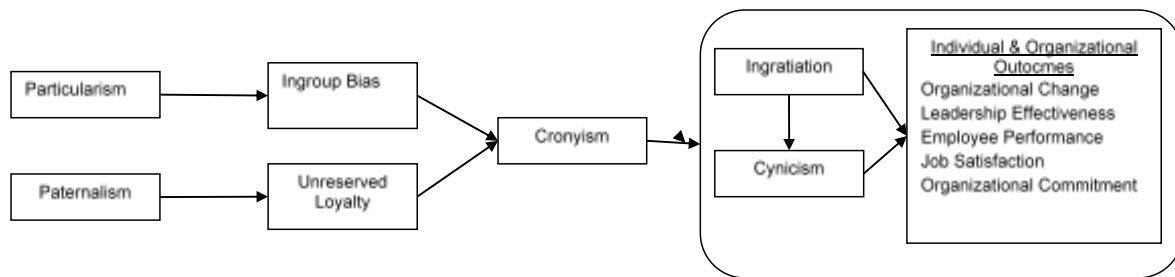
Directions for future research

In this study the researcher has presented a conceptual model by including two more variables in the model i.e. organizational cynisicm and ingratiation while outcomes of the study also have two new variables in the model i.e. organizational change and leadership effectiveness. This model was adopted from Khatri and Tsang (2003) but it was not empirically tested. So the researcher is going to introduce this model without empirical testing. Future studies may test this model and report different interesting results. This model can be tested in different cultures in different sectors. Researchers may investigate that problems of cronyism and cynicism, which have high impacts in public sector or private sectors organizations and which are generally negative.

There are other variables can be added in this model and this model can likely be refined and redeveloped in future studies. This model is considered to be important for developing countries in the world. They can reduce poverty by reducing levels of political/organizational cronyism, cynicism and ingratiation in their cultures. Most of employees are underpaid and they cannot meet their monthly needs. By introducing a more competetive environment and ethical working rules this can lead the organizations and developing countries on the path to prosperity and development.

Affiliation: This research was conducted at the College of Public Health and Health Informatics, Qassim University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

References

Abdullah, H. S., Salman, A. J. & Ahmed, I. A (2019). Integrating the value chain and balanced scorecard to evaluate the overall performance of a tourism organization. *African Journal of Hospitality,Tourism and Leisure*, 8(5), 1-11

Bakker, E.D. (2007). Integrity and Cynicism: Possibilities and Constraints of Moral Communication. *Journal of agricultural and environmental ethics*, 20,119–136.

Bernerth, J., Armenakis, A., Field, H. & Walker, H. (2007). Justice, cynicism, and commitment: A study of important organizational change variables. Joirnal of Applied Behavioral. Science, 43, 303–326.

Bolino, M., Long &Turnley, B. (2003).Neglected issues in citizenship research. In RH Moorman (Chair), New frontiers for OCB research: An examination of four research directions. Symposium

conducted for the Midwest Academy of Management, St. Louis, MO.

Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. & Euwema, M.C. (2005). Job Resources Buffer the Impact of Job Demands on Burnout. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 10(2), 170–180.

Busari, A. H. (2011). Cognitive Style and Leadership Effectiveness: Government Linekd Companies. Thesis Bradford. UK

Cheng, B. S. (1999). 'Chinese CEOs' Employee Categorization and Managerial Behaviour', in H. S. R. Kao, D. Sinha and B. Wilpert (eds.), Management and Cultural Values: The Indigenization of Organizations in Asia, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Chi, S. C. (1999). 'The Role of Chin-Shins of Top Managers in Taiwanese Organizations: ExploringChinese Leadership Phenomena', in H. S. R. Kao, D. Sinha and B. Wilpert (eds.),Management andCultural Values: The Indigenization of Organizations in Asia (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA).

Chen, Z. X. & Francesco, A. M. (2000). Employee demography, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions in China: do cultural differences matter?.Human relations, 53(6), 869-887.

Dean, J. W., Brandes, P. & Dharwadkar, R. (1998).Organizational Cynicism.*Academy of Management Review*, 22, 341-352.

Furnham, A. (1997). The Psychology of Behaviour at Work: The Individual in the Organization, Psychology Press, Hove, United Kingdom.

Grzeskowiak, S. & Al-Khatib, J. A. (2009). Does morality explain opportunism in marketing channel negotiations? The moderating role of trust. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management,* 37(2), 142-160.

Khan, S.N., Busari, A.H. & Abdullah, S,M (2018). The essence of followership: Review of the literature andfuture research directions, servant leadership styles and strategic decision making, Pennsylvania, USA.

Khatri, N. & Tsang, E.W.K (2003). Antecedents and Consequences of Cronyism in Organizations, *Journal of Business Ethics.* 43, 289–303.

Khaola, P. (2019). fostering creativity and innovation though leadership and affective commitment: The moderated mediation analysis. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, Vol 8 (Special Edition CUT), 1-12.

Khanta, F. & Srinuan, C. (2019). The relationships between marketing mix, brand equity, lifestyle and attitude on a consumer's private product brand purchasing decision. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(5), 1-14.

McCarty, W, Zhao, J. & Garland,B. (2007). Occupational Stress and Burnout Between Male and Female Police Officers: Are There Any Gender Differences? Policing: *An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management,* 30, 672-691.

Mukhezakule, M. (2019). the relationship between corporate strategy, strategic leadership and sustainable organisational performance: proposing a conceptual framework for the South Africanaviation industry. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(3), 1-19.

Niederhoffer, A. (1967). Behind the shield: The police in urban society. Garden City, NJ: Anchor.
Nicolaides, A. & King Carl Tornam Duho. (2019). Effective Leadership in Organizations: African Ethics and Corruption, *Modern Economy*,10(7), 1713-1743

Nicolaides, A. (2015). The paradox of Business Ethics, Quality and Leadership: the path to business sustainability. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 4(1), 1-20.

Rao, H. M., Zaidi, U. (2020). How different perceived leadership styles have an influence on organisational commitment on tourism smes? *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure,* 9(1), 1-17

Redding, S. G. (1990). The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

Shaheen S. (2017). Using organizational cronyism as an explanatory mechanism in the relationship between leader member exchange, psychological contracts and outcomes: moderating role of culture. Thesis MAJU. Islamabad, Pakistan.

Stanley, D. J., JMeyer, J. P.,& Topolnytsky, L. (2005). Employee Cynicism and Resistance to Organizational Change. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 19(4), 429-459.

Trice, H. M. & Beyer, J.M. (1993). *The Cultures of Work Organizations* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ).

Vecchio, R. P. (1997). 'Are You In or Out with Your Boss?', in R. P. Vecchio (ed.), Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.

Yukl, G. A. (2002). Leadership in organizations, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River.