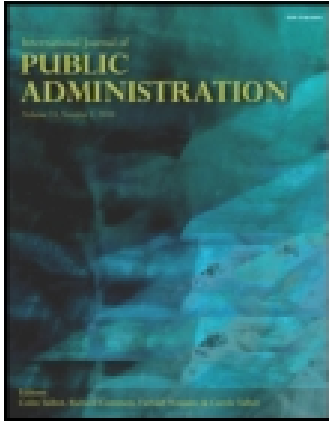


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Leadership Styles, Workplace Politics and Moral Identity of Ugandan Public Procurement Staff

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The study predicts the moral identity of Ugandan public procurement staff using situational factors like leadership styles, social interactions, organizational politics and personal isomorphism, largely ignored in documented empirical literature. This study builds upon previous studies which assert that much remains to be learned about moral identity. Data were collected from staff handling the public procurement function in 105 randomly selected procuring and disposing entities (PDEs). Data relating to the study constructs were collected using self-administered questionnaires and an interview guide. The study established that workplace factors singularly and/or interactively predict moral identity of procurement staff in PDEs in Uganda. These findings have both policy and managerial implications which we discuss and present in this article.

Keywords: leadership styles, white-collar crime, workplace politics, moral identity, ethics, Uganda

BACKGROUND

Cases of procurement-related workplace deviant behavior continue to be common in Uganda (Ntayi et al., 2011a,b). Policy makers and researchers wonder why such behaviors persist alongside a strong regulatory framework (Ntayi, Ngoboka, & Kakooza, 2012). Evidence from the Common wealth Heads of Government Meeting report (CHOGM) of (2010) and Uganda integrity reports of 2008 and 2010, reveal a disturbing moral identity challenge where respected public officers (including government ministers) exhibit inconsistent behavior over time. Cases of public servants engaging in ethically questionable activities that harm procuring and disposing entities (PDEs) and the general public abound. Whenever such unethical conduct is unearthed, the individuals involved are blamed (Felps, Mitchell, & Byington, 2006) without addressing their motivators.

A critical review of literature isolates situational factors which have been largely ignored in empirical literature yet they could explain employees' tendency to disengage moral identity, which resides in virtues of willpower, integrity, and

morality (Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). The purpose of this study is to examine the individual and combined effects of the situational factors like leadership styles, social interactions, organizational politics, and personality isomorphism on moral identity, using a sample of public procurement personnel.

This study is deemed necessary because researchers, policy makers, and practitioners have continued to share concerns for counter-normative behaviors that harm organizations and their stakeholders. Emphasis has been placed on discovering factors that drive unethical workplace behaviors, commonly referred to by organizational theorists as deviant or counter-productive behaviors (O'Leary-Kelly, Duffy, & Griffin, 2000). Research suggesting that leaders are involved in committing deviant acts has started to emerge. Scandalous cases involving leaders of internationally renowned companies like World-Com and Enron have helped cement this trend. At the national level, scandals involving top leaders of local PDEs like the notorious construction of invisible valley dams scandal in the Ministry of Agriculture; Global Fund Fraud scandal, of the purchase of junk helicopters scandal, and the undersized military uniforms scandal in the Ministry of Defense; construction of substandard and sometimes invisible roads by the Ministry of Works and Transport can be traced back to leadership of these government ministries. Recurrence of scandals of equal or higher ethical magnitude

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like the Temangalo procurement transaction scandal in the Uganda National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) scandal bring to question the moral identity of staff handling public procurement.

Such an unprecedented record of workplace deviance involving both leaders and employees of PDEs raises questions of personal moral identity and isomorphism. "Moral identity involves having an explicit consistent theory of oneself as systematically acting on the basis of respect and/or concern for the rights and/or welfare of others" (Moshman, 2005, p. 122). Personal isomorphism is a constraining process which forces procurement staff to resemble other staff that face the same set of moral environmental conditions (Ntayi, Ngoboka, & Kakooza, 2012). There is a general feeling that leadership styles of superiors and the prevailing workplace politics may have acted as a catalyst in promoting unethical conduct and personal isomorphism. Such isomorphic forces which constrain procurement officers from acting morally and professionally may have been due to job insecurity and career uncertainty. The above observations contradict our common understanding that leadership is supposed to set the ethical tone at the top of organizations, sharpen their formal and informal ethical cultures, and manage the ethical (and unethical) conduct of organization members (Treviño & Brown, 2004).

Kemper (as cited by Treviño & Brown, 2004, p. 72) states that "leaders who engage in unethical behaviors create a context supporting parallel deviance, meaning that employees observe and are likely to imitate the inappropriate conduct." Shao, Aquino, and Freeman (2008) and Ross and Nisbett (1991) argue that workplace leadership and social and political pressures can lead employees to violate even their most deeply held moral standards. Such workplace pressures may condition employees to become morally blind and naive. This results in creation of systems which promote collective unethical behavior. These collective behaviors are socially constructed interests, which are transformed into units of "cooperation" containing elements of coercion and sanctions (Bensman & Gerver, 1963). Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012), using data from Ugandan PDEs, revealed that workplace social pressures and politics that occur in a state of serious economic, employment and retirement uncertainties are the source of an employer's coercive power to comply to unethical demands even when employees have a sound moral identity.

It is such experiences that employees replicate to guide their moral behavior. These situational factors create a moral deficiency syndrome that tends to deactivate individuals' virtues of willpower, integrity, and moral desire thereby affecting their moral identity negatively. The whole adaptation and homogenization process of unethical conduct permeates the organizational structure along lines of both formal and informal authority levels through osmotic and capillarity forces. Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012)

unearth a ubiquitous competitive survival adaptation mechanism in Ugandan PDEs which has permeated and taken grip of the organizations recruitment function and systems. Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012) assert that, in Ugandan PDEs it is now a common practice to recruit the procurement staff based on loyalty, and an extensive network of social connections, largely ignoring competence. It is such procurement staff that tend to be deficient in moral imagination and reflective thinking who provide support in committing acts of a deviant nature. Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012) suggest that, in the Ugandan public procurement function, staff with competitive and aggressive traits increase their chances of survival and pass them on to future generations of employees.

Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012) continue to say that "in a patriarchy-based community, all authority from above has to be respected and obeyed by all employees irrespective of the strength of their moral identity, failure of which is interpreted as insubordination." The perceptions of staff involved in public procurement about an impending job loss resulting from failure to respond to corrupt requests of the PDE leaders results into coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphism. No PDE staff wants to think of the trauma, nervousness, hopelessness, loss of confidence, and behavioral problems associated with unemployment (Layard, 2005). Such a work environment perpetuates coercive work practices in which employees succumb to corrupt requests of the most powerful and strategically positioned politicians and technocrats.

This article attempts to examine the relationships among leadership styles, social interactions, organizational politics, personal isomorphic issues, and moral identity of procurement staff in Ugandan PDEs. We believe that it is important to examine the role of the above-mentioned constructs singularly or interactively in a developing country context characterized by unprecedented procurement-related unethical behaviors. These situational factors have largely been ignored in research studies predicting moral identity in a work-related environment. Much of the literature on moral identity has concentrated on theoretical issues. As noted by Shao, Aquino, and Freeman (2008, p. 524), "to date, empirical studies of moral identity are relatively scarce, so many fruitful paths for further research remain to be explored."

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Leadership Styles, Social Interactions, and Homogeneity of Workplace Behaviors

Treviño and Brown (2004) reveal that despite evidence suggesting the importance of leaders, little is still known about the specific role of leaders in influencing ethical guidance in the workplace. Schminke, Wells, Peyrefitte, and Seborá (2002) provide evidence supporting the relationship

between leadership style and level of moral reasoning, and subordinates' conformity and moral reasoning in ethical decision-making. According to Bandura's (1973) social learning theory, employees are modeled in what to do and what not to do by their leaders through the social learning process. New employees observe the behavior of leaders and its consequences reflected in their roles, virtue and their power to affect the behavior and outcomes of their followers. The NIS (2008), NIS (2010) and CHOGM (2010) findings reveal massive procurement irregularities involving fraud, corruption, embezzlement by high ranking ministers, permanent secretaries and local and central government PDEs technical personnel. These reports provide bedrock for studying the link between leadership styles, institutional politics, social learning from social interactions perspective, coercive, mimetic and normative behaviors. In this article, we argue that white-collar crime is a form of system dysfunction that originates from top organizational leaders, winding itself down the structure through organizational politics, coercing employees to either mimic or be part of unethical collaborative social networks, thereby affecting moral identity negatively. For example, when leaders enrich themselves at the expense of the PDEs or employees, as has been the case in Uganda (CHOGM, 2010; NIS, 2008; NIS, 2010), soon or later, employees learn to mimic their leaders, because such behavior is expected. Similarly, we expect mimetic behavior from subordinates who see PDE leaders and/or accounting officers rewarded with promotions after committing white-collar crimes. There is sparse research linking social interactions, normative isomorphism and moral identity. Past research has been piecemeal in nature. A stream of research from Uganda, for instance, has revealed that psychological climate, organizational anomie (Ntayi, Ahiauzu & Eyaa, 2011), workplace social cohesion, groupthink, ethical attitudes (Ntayi, Byabashaija, Eyaa, Ngoma, & Muliira, 2010) are significant predictors of unethical behavior. In another related study, Ntayi, Eyaa and Kalubanga (2011) reveal that shared ethical beliefs of a procuring entity affect individual member's ethical orientations. Shao, Aquino, and Freeman (2008) assert that actions and interactions which take place in social, educational, and workplace settings have an effect on the development and maintenance of moral identity and an individual's ability to act virtuously. We therefore hypothesize that; H1: Leadership style, social interactions, organizational politics, and mimetic isomorphism will significantly and positively predict moral identity of procurement staff.

Organizational Politics, Coercive Isomorphism, and Moral Identity

According to Vigoda (2003), organizational (or workplace) politics characterizes a distinctive sphere of interpersonal dealings in organizations. Organizational politics is defined as "behaviors that occur on an informal basis within an organization and involve intentional acts of influence that

are designed to protect or enhance individuals' professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible" (Drory, 1993, p. 59). Scholars have revealed that organizational politics affect employees' attitudes, behavior and performance in the workplace both positively and negatively (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). Kumar and Ghadially (1989) reveal that organizational politics has the ability to improve performance, promotion and authority recognition. On the negative side, Folger et al. (1992) and Ferris et al. (1996) contend that organizational politics promotes organizational inefficiency. This finding, supports Ferris et al. (as cited by Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006, p. 7) who pointed to "a number of expected outcomes from organizational politics to include psychological outcomes (employee stress and exhaustion), a negative change in employees' attitudes (trust, dissatisfaction, organizational commitment, etc.), and an impact on actual behaviors (tardiness, absenteeism, neglecting work, job turnover)." Additionally, organizational politics creates manipulative tendencies and behavior of coercive influence, and subversive and semi-legal actions (Mintzberg, 1989). Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012) contend that organizational leadership has the ability to coerce employees through organizational politics. This practice originated from legal rights, privileges, and powers that place leaders in a position to force another person to comply under the pretext of legal compulsion. Ntayi, Ngoboka and Kakooza (2012) note that economic and employment uncertainty are the ultimate source of an employer's power to force a worker to comply to their unethical demands even when they have a strong moral identity. Actions that at one time are coerced can become voluntary at another, through workplace socialization. Figure 1 below provides a summary of the relationships between constructs presented in the review of literature. From the above, we can therefore hypothesize that, H2: Isomorphism will significantly and positively mediate the leadership style-moral identity relationship.

In the next section we provide the methods followed in undertaking the study, including the research setting, sampling design and procedure, measurement scales for the

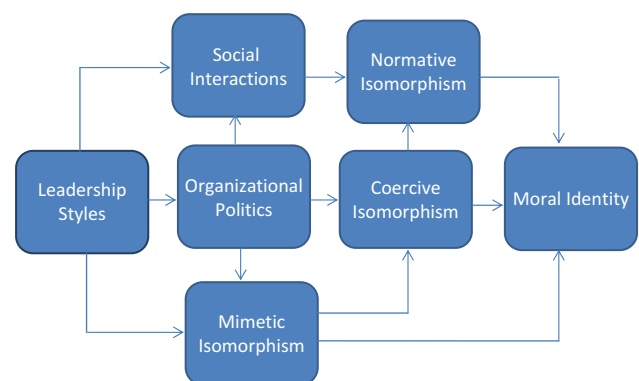


FIGURE 1 Predicting Moral Identity of Ugandan public procurement officers (color figure available online).

study constructs, and validity, reliability, and tools used in data analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting, Sampling Design, and Procedure

This study utilized data collected from staff handling public procurement activities in 105 PDEs selected from a population of 131 PDEs in Ugandan. The study targeted an average of four people from each PDE using a sampling frame obtained from the procurement and disposal unit of each PDE, giving a sample size of 420 staff handling procurement. Respondents who were selected for this study had participated in the procurement function either as staff of the procurement and disposal units (PDUs) or as members of the contracts committee, evaluation committee or as an accounting officer. For practical reasons, the geographical scope of the study was limited to PDEs in the capital city, Kampala. Staff of the PDEs formed the unit of analysis. All item scales were derived from previous research studies. Okafor and Osuagwu (2006) recommend adapting item scales used in previous studies because of their wide item scales reliability and validity.

A self-administered questionnaire was the main instrument used to elicit responses. The items for the study constructs were tested for validity and reliability and then edited through a pilot test process before the final survey, as recommended by Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela (1998). Only 45 randomly selected procurement officers were sampled for the pilot study. The questionnaire was accompanied by an interview guide capturing all the study constructs and aiming at collecting additional detailed data to explain the behaviors of procurement staff. Validity and reliability of the qualitative data were obtained through repeated interviewing and by availing the unabridged interview transcripts to the interviews for verification.

Measures

Perceptions of organizational politics were measured using items developed by the Kacmar and Carlson (1994) revised version of the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale. We adopted all the 12-item questions due to their parsimonious nature. These item scales were considered valid and reliable because they have been tested in different work settings and environments. Respondents were requested to indicate their degree of agreement on a five-point anchored Likert scale with "1" = Strongly Disagree and "5" = Strongly Agree. The overall Cronbach alpha coefficient scale was considered adequate at 0.79. Sample item scales included: "Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in this organization"; "Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead in this PDE"; "In this PDE, there

is a group of people involved in procurement who do things their way because they cannot be challenged"; and "Rewards go only to those who work hard in this PDE" (reverse coded).

This article adopted the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) leadership styles measures, originally developed by Bass (1985), and modified by Avolio and Bass (1991). This measure is commonly referred to as the Avolio and Bass (1991) Full Range of Leadership Model. The measure was preferred because it has been tested in the variety of work settings to predict organizational performance and produced consistent results (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Den Hertog et al., 1997; Parry, 2003). Most of these studies revealed three leadership styles: "laissez-faire" or no leadership; transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. This instrument is premised on the assumption that all the three styles can be found in every leader. This thinking is consistent with Lewin et al. (1939) and Blake and Mouton (1964) who demonstrated that the leader's effectiveness is dependent on his/her behavioral style, which can be learned and made part of his psyche. A shorter version of the model containing 32 items was preferred as recommended by Avolio and Bass (1991). All item scales were anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale with "1" = Never to "5" = Always. All sampled employees involved in the procurement function were asked to evaluate the degree to which a particular behavior was typical of their immediate superior. Sample items included: "My superior speaks enthusiastically about our procurement plans and goals as a team", "My supervisor rewards procurement-related performance when his/her expectations are fulfilled", "My superior is not present when he/she is needed." The overall Cronbach reliability index for the leadership style construct was 0.84

This study combined a number of measures developed by previous scholars to measure social interactions. The study utilized some interview questions from Colby and Damon (1995) administered to moral exemplars. Other works consulted included Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, and Alisat (2003); and Walker, Hennig, and Krettenauer (2000). These scholars provide clear indicators of social influences, particularly interactions with co-workers and peers. All item scales were anchored on a five-point Likert scale with "1" = Strongly Disagree and "5" = Strongly Agree. Sample questions include:

1. In this PDE, when I joined an existing team, my interactions with co-workers resulted in a shift of my moral identity;
2. These days I tend to use rationalization tactics to justify moral behaviors;
3. The socialization process that I have undergone in this PDE has helped me to interpret moral issues in a rational manner;
4. Interactions with co-workers have fostered a team-related identity.

The development of measures for personal isomorphism followed the ideas of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) used to conceptualize and construct item scales for institutional isomorphism. Special care was taken in constructing the instrument so as to avoid creating disproportionate measures of mimetic isomorphism as noted by Mizruchi and Fein (1999) without compromising on the validity and reliability of measures. Personal isomorphism was conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of coercive, mimetic, and normative components. All item scales were anchored on a five-point Likert scale with "1" = Strongly Disagree and "5" = Strongly Agree. All negative statements were reverse coded prior to the analysis.

Sample items for these components are as below. For coercive Isomorphism:

- a. When I joined this PDE, soon or later, I realized that I belong to a work-related collusion group that makes the organization not to achieve value for money procurements;
- b. In this PDE, it is normal for employees to design and/or adopt workplace survival tactics;
- c. In this PDE, keeping quiet will not exonerate you from being insubordinate;
- d. My superiors interpret my professional advice as being insubordinate;
- e. In this PDE, I am constantly coerced to abandon my professionalism and join the bandwagon;
- f. In this PDE, even when the procurement rules are not followed, we find a way of preparing acceptable reports for the regulators.

Sample measures for mimetic isomorphism:

- a. This organization has created workplace uncertainty for its professional staff;
- b. This organization has created a work place environment that makes goals of the professional staff ambiguous;
- c. This organization has created a workplace environment that makes roles and duties of its professional staff ambiguous;
- d. In this PDE, there is no clear superior-subordinate relationship; and (e) My job as a procurement professional in this organization is not clear.

Sample measurement items for normative isomorphism:

- a. In this PDE, conditions governing the professional staff are defined and articulated;
- b. In this PDE, methods of work for the professional staff are defined and articulated;
- c. In this PDE, I am in charge and control of the procurement function, right from initiation to post-contract management;

- d. I belong to a legitimate procurement profession;
- e. In this PDE, I feel, I have occupational autonomy;
- f. I have established a cognitive base for my professional autonomy in this organization. The combined Cronbach alpha coefficient index was 0.76.

The self-regulatory influence of moral identity necessitated the use of well-developed valid and reliable measures on which employees of the procurement function base their moral self-concepts. We adopted the Aquino and Reed's (2002) ten-item scale, which assesses two sub-dimensions of moral identity called internalization and symbolization. Procurement staff were asked to rate themselves in terms of the extent to which a constellation of moral traits is important to them. Aquino and Reed's (2002) measure has demonstrated good psychometric properties in assessing moral identity (e.g., Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009; Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). We also reviewed and incorporated the Zhu (2006) moral identity measure which has been considered in previous studies as both valid and reliable. Respondents were requested to indicate their response category on a five-point Likert scale with "5"=Strongly Agree and "1" = Strongly Disagree. Sample items include: "I view being an ethical person as an important part of who I am." Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.86.

Pilot Test, Validity, and Reliability

A pilot study was carried out using a purposive sample of 45 procurement staff from Local Government to test for validity and reliability of the measurement items. The pre-test sample was considered appropriate because it had characteristics similar to the sample used in the main survey. The procurement work environment has political leaders, social and leadership environments similar to the rest of PDEs in Uganda. During the pre-test phase, respondents identified unclear, redundant, and ambiguous item scales. These items were reviewed and improved before the final survey. The final questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study, requesting respondents to cooperate and assuring them that the responses obtained from them shall be kept confidential. The Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained for all study constructs of leadership styles, workplace politics, social interactions, personal isomorphism, and moral identity exceeded the minimum acceptable value of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978).

Analysis of Data

A response rate of 61.4 percent was obtained, corresponding to 258 respondents. Data were checked for entry errors, missing values, presence of outliers and normality prior to the multivariate analysis. Outliers and missing values were

not a serious threat in the data. The SPSS “Missing Values Analysis” was used to statistically test whether missing values were random or non-random. Missing values were found to be random and accounted for 1 percent of all the returned questionnaires. Data were tested for the normality assumption and found to exhibit a normal distribution pattern; all missing values were filled using linear interpolation. Additional tests included stem and leaf, the PP and QQ plots which confirmed normality of the data.

RESULTS

The sample comprised of 65 percent males and 35 percent females working for PDEs as procurement staff. On average, respondents had university bachelor’s degree as their highest level of education attained. Their average age was between 35 and 45 years of age. PDEs had on average existed for six years. Table 1 provides means, standard deviations, and correlations scores for leadership styles, social interactions, organizational politics, normative isomorphism, coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and moral identity. The relationships among all the study constructs listed above with moral identity, excluding normative isomorphism, were significantly negative. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies reported in most of the literature. Additionally, levels for all study constructs excluding moral identity were high as portrayed by the means close to or above 4.00 on the five-point Likert scale. However, levels of moral identity were middling, with an average response of “3” = Neither agree nor disagree. To test rigorously for the prediction of moral identity, a hierarchical linear regression model was undertaken at four levels of analysis and the results are displayed in Table 2.

Variance in Moral Identity Explained by the Independent Constructs

A block of dummy or control variables consisting of age, gender, job position, level of education, and organizational tenure were entered in model 1. This was done to

accommodate the view that identity can be determined by gender (Gilligan, 1982). Additionally, Markus and Kitayama (1991) opine that people of different backgrounds have strikingly different concepts of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of the two.

Results in Table 2 revealed that organizational tenure ($\beta = -0.115, p \leq 0.05$) and age ($\beta = 0.133, p \leq 0.01$) were significant predictors of moral identity accounting for 27.3 percent of the variance with F change statistics of 26.93. In model 2, work-related behavior modification variables of leadership styles ($\beta = -0.177, p \leq 0.01$), organizational politics ($\beta = -0.105, p \leq 0.01$) and social interactions ($\beta = -0.102, p \leq 0.01$) were entered and found to significantly account for 37.4 percent ($\Delta R^2 = 0.374$) of the variance in moral identity and the overall model was significant at 1 percent with F change statistics of 6.179 supporting hypothesis H1. A block of forced homogeneity/isomorphic workplace behavioral compliant factors were introduced in model 3. Results revealed that mimetic isomorphism ($\beta = -0.096, p \leq 0.01$), coercive isomorphism ($\beta = -0.085, p \leq 0.05$) and normative isomorphism ($\beta = -0.035, p \geq 0.05$) predict 7.1 percent of the variance in moral identity with F change statistics of 1.697 providing more support for H1. The overall regression model was significant at 1 percent.

Finally, in model 4, we conducted an empirical test focusing on the interactive effects of perceptions of leadership styles, social interactions, organizational politics, mimetic isomorphism, coercive isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. Surprisingly, results supported the proposed two-way interaction suggesting that perceptions of leadership styles have negative effects on moral identity behaviors of procurement staff who report having experienced higher levels of organizational politics and mimetic isomorphism contrary to hypotheses H2. Additionally, consistent with Figure 2, moral identity diminishes with higher perceptions of leadership styles for procurement staff who experience high mimetic isomorphism, while those with low mimetic isomorphism tend to maintain and/or improve their moral identities. Finally, we discuss the findings within the context of PDEs in Uganda and provide both policy and managerial implications.

TABLE 1
Means, Standard deviations, and Zero Order: Correlations of the Study Constructs

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Leadership styles (1)	3.94	1.10	1						
Organizational politics (2)	4.52	0.66	.279**	1					
Organizational Social Interactions (3)	4.03	0.75	.416**	.382**	1				
Mimetic Isomorphism (4)	3.85	1.07	.457**	.135	.396**	1			
Normative Isomorphism (5)	4.49	0.62	.132	.360**	.407**	.324**	1		
Coercive Isomorphism (6)	4.60	0.51	.074	.576**	.332**	.333**	.417**	1	
Moral Identity of procurement staff (7)	3.34	0.41	-.537**	-.378**	-.518**	-.493**	-.187	-.249*	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N1 = 86 PDEs; N2 = 258 Procurement staff (Unit of analysis).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 2
Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Moral Identity of Ugandan Procurement Staff)

Predictor variable	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β	Model 4 β
(Constant)	1.564**	1.600**	1.812**	1.784**
Organizational Tenure	-.115*	-.082*	-.070*	-.055
Job Position	-.031 (ns)	-.037*	-.037*	-.020
Level of Education	-.039 (ns)	.049 (ns)	.034 (ns)	.032
Gender	.064 (ns)	.006 (ns)	-.025 (ns)	-.073
Age	.133**	.047 (ns)	.023 (ns)	.037
Organizational Leadership		-.177**	-.137**	-.170**
Organizational politics		-.105**	-.112**	-.117*
Organizational Social Interactions		-.102**	-.116**	-.125**
Mimetic Isomorphism			-.096**	-.100**
Coercive Isomorphism			-.085*	-.093*
Normative Isomorphism			.035 (ns)	.038
SOIXNOM				-.009
SOIXCOER				-.053
SOIXMIM				-.003
POLXNOM				.005
POLXCOER				-.027
POLXMIM				-.032
OLXMIM				-.175**
OLXSOIXNOM				-.021
OLXPOLXCOER				-.039
OLXPOLXMIM				-.216**
R ²	.273	.648	.719	.779
R ² (adj.)	.227	.611	.677	.705
ΔR ²	.273	.373	.071	.060
F	F (5,79) = 5.994	F (8,76) = 17.470**	F (11,73) = 16.989**	F (21,63) = 10.557**
ΔF	5.994	26.927**	6.179**	1.697

Notes: *ρ < .05; **ρ < .01; N1 = 86 PDEs; N2 = 258 Procurement staff (Unit of Analysis).

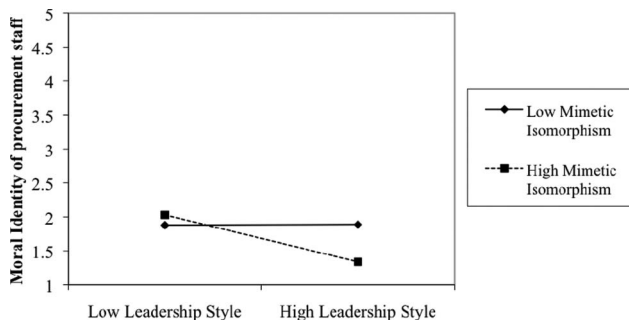


FIGURE 2 Testing for interactions.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Contrary to H1, this study finds that organizational leadership, organizational politics, social interactions, mimetic isomorphism, and coercive isomorphism are significant negative predictors of moral identity. These findings partially contradict the results of Parry (2003) who used data from the public sector to reveal that the leader’s ability to consistently and coherently use negative reinforcements creates a reflexive bond that guides the development of identity. A feasible explanation for this contradiction is derived from the

results of the in-depth interviews which reveal that the leaders’ use of negative reinforcements, conditions procurement officers to sacrifice their moral identity in favor of their superiors’ preference. Such behaviors develop and blossom in the presence of excessive concentration of powers in leaders of PDEs with unquestionable wisdom and authority on matters of public procurement. Interviewees were of the opinion that the concentration of unchecked powers in PDEs in Uganda makes leaders develop delusions that result in manipulation of the procurement rules and regulations in their favor. Their behaviors take root, blossom, and grow through subjugated, hand-picked conformists or minions.

The following case illustrates this point:

Case 8. [T]he procurement job in this PDE has been killed by handpicked incompetent people who were given authority to manage the PDU. Such people, . . . just picked from anywhere, cannot provide professional guidance and performance. For reasons and/or motives best known to themselves, all failures in the unit are either heaped on us or the PPDA Act. That’s why emergency procurements are common. How often do you hear of strategic procurement plans in this PDE? You need to check audit reports for this PDE since 2005 to prove my point. The same audit queries are raised year in and year out. Do you think we are incompetent and stupid? We know what to do . . .

These conformists are weak and vulnerable to the manipulations of superiors. They usually seek the leader's advice and approval before procurement decisions are executed. Superiors actively participate and influence supplier pre-qualification, preparation of procurement plans, and contract evaluation and awards. Superiors are considered a fountain of wisdom, mentors, and trusted advisors. This situation explains why most employees in these PDEs, are kept on their toes courting superiors so as to keep their jobs because leaders recognize, promote, and/or reward those who do not question their actions. Dissenters have no place in these PDEs; unquestionable loyalty is expected if employees have to retain their jobs. This has created an environment of fear and uncertainty as employees vie for recognition.

The contracts committee and other decision making organs of the PDEs are forced to ratify all decisions taken outside the procurement rules and procedures at any cost. Superiors override the moral self of procurement officers to the extent that they do what they are told without any questioning. This practice has created of politically affiliated groups of employees who rationalize superiors' decisions taken outside the morally acceptable norms and procedure. For commissions and hospitals, influential and controlling employees draw legitimacy, power, and support from either superiors or board of directors. This is a common phenomenon in situations where some members of the board are beneficiaries of the superiors' transactions. Similar situations occur in ministries, although they have structures different from that of hospitals, commissions, and other institutions and organizations. Quite often, PDEs fire morally upright employees, destroying their moral record and reputation in favor of morally defunct influential and controlling employees. Dissent results in job loss, blackmail, and fear. Employees with power tend to dominate their colleagues. The case below supports the above discussion.

Case 25. I have observed and keenly followed the politics of this organization. Shuffling rotten eggs on the same tray and pretending that they are ok, is the order of the day. Favoritism, intrigue and malice are common. This has created conflict and a moral dilemma between work standards, the PPDA procedures and ability to act according to professional judgment. Agreeing with powerful others in this PDE seems to be the best alternative, since there is a group of procurement staff that do things their way because they cannot be challenged. Quite often, my superior prefers to stay behind after the normal working hours and scrutinize all procurement related papers and files. He only approves transactions in which he expects 'economic gains'. I was blacklisted by my boss because he knows that I don't quite agree with him on matters of procurement professionalism. As a result, he has put me under disguised social surveillance (intelligence). I often have to choose between following professional standards and doing what is best for my superiors. Workplace politics favors, recognizes and rewards misfits rather than hardworking and morally upright individuals. There is a general fear among employees because nobody

knows exactly who is who. . . . As for me, I would rather stop here because I still need my job. I now just do the minimum to keep earning a salary for my family. . . .

The above observations have policy implications. There is need to create a unique governance regime that checks the powers of the superiors and politicians overseeing these PDEs so as discourage fraudulent and manipulative leadership and promote accountability. This requires creating a group of external directors who have a reputation for ethics and empower them to check on the activities and fraudulent actions of the PDE leaders. This may diminish the negative effects of workplace politics and conspiracy to defraud the PDEs. Additionally, a 360-degree evaluation may be instituted to solve the problem of victimization of innocent moral employees. This will further reduce promotion of undeserving employees of the PDEs.

In highly politicized workplace environments like that revealed in case 25, political maneuvers tend to create a relationship of fear and distrust among employees, block communication, and damage constructive social relations. This makes the procurement staff native, withholding their professional support and advice. Researchers suggest that a work environment which is rife with politics tends to create fear and discourage procurement professionals from providing professional guidance and judgment (Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006; Ntayi, Ngoboka, & Kakooza, 2012; NIS, 2008; NIS, 2010). This may partially explain why unprofessional procurement continues to exist in Ugandan PDEs despite the presence of a considerable pool of procurement personnel in the country, the 2003 PPDA Act, and the strict supervisory role of the Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (PPDA). In highly politicized and socially constructed environments, the negative outcomes for the procurement personnel's moral identity are significant. This partially explains why moral exemplars are difficult to find in Ugandan public procurement. These findings and the subsequent discussion ignites yet another debate on violation of "moral contract" which is beyond the scope of this article.

Another implication derived from the foregoing is that PDEs need to evolve ethics and accountability policies as part of improving the ills associated with organizational politics. Procurement staff should be able to put down their feet and act in accordance with their ethical values and beliefs even when they are against mainstream thinking. This requires developing procurement staff's self-efficacy to act with courage and oppose workplace injustice guided by clear ethical goals. This will, however, require protecting staff from the attacks and victimization of the superiors. Individuals who oppose unethical practices and systems should be recognized, praised, and rewarded.

Interviewees revealed that accounting officers assign part of the procurement officer's roles and responsibilities to other employees in the PDEs, a practice that renders procurement officers ineffective. The study further revealed that

social interactions affected the moral identity of procurement officers. Interviewees revealed that these social groups and networks were of two types: open and underground. Underground networks were quite often used by superiors to spy on employee loyalty thereby affecting moral identity negatively. Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit (2006, p. 9) states that “employees learn by observing and mimicking the customary behaviors and know when to withhold comment or ignore situations so that they will not have to defy their superior’s decisions or deviate from the acceptable political standards.” A national professional disciplinary board be set up to receive complaints from employees who complain about unfair, unprofessional treatment by colleagues and superiors. The board should be set up on the principles of the court system. A superior and/or any other employee who is convicted of having subjugated subordinates through coercion, threats, exerting undue influence, and other techniques should be blacklisted and prevented from holding any public office for a certain period.

Interestingly, personality factors of normative, coercive and mimetic isomorphism did not significantly mediate the:

- a. social interactions-moral identity
- b. politics-moral identity relationships as had been expected.

While this was unexpected, it may give further credence to the argument that the perceptions of organizational politics-moral identity relationship is complex and that other variables, such as rational identity, rational moral identity, constructivism, and personal construct psychology must be considered to fully understand the relationship between these variables. Contrary to H2, the results of this study demonstrate that procurement staff who score high on mimetic isomorphism and experience high perceptions of leadership style and high organizational politics are likely to modify their moral identity negatively to fit the workplace environment while staff with low mimetic behavior are more likely to maintain or improve their moral identities positively under similar conditions. In particular, a negative relationship between perceptions of leadership styles and moral identity was found only in employees who were higher in mimetic isomorphism and perceived high organizational politics.

CONCLUSION

These results augment the findings of Shao, Aquino, and Freeman (2008) and extend the moral identity literature by identifying another important organizational behavior and personality constructs of organizational politics and mimetic isomorphism that serve as moderating influences in the leadership style-moral identity relationship. Furthermore, our results suggest that the moral identity of a procurement staff

may be exposed to manipulation by leadership in a PDE with high organizational politics. Such employees are left with no option but to adapt mimetic behavior for survival.

This study reveals that the public procurement workplace environment in Uganda is highly politicized and has become a war in which employees in leadership positions stock their moral arsenal with the latest moral artillery waiting for an opportunity to unleash moral weaponry against unsuspecting procurement subordinates. It is the strongest, most well-connected procurement officer and not necessarily the most intelligent who will survive the moral warfare. Organizational leaders take advantage of the patriarchal nature of our PDEs which are managed as modern police or army units with lots of instructions and directives from the “top” to procurement staff with less room left for their professional interaction and advice. Professionalism is only considered necessary at a time of either making good or insulating or padding irregular past procurement transactions. This process has been termed public procurement “reverse engineering” by the author. Consistent with biblical teachings, survival instincts have forced and/or coerced public procurement staff to sell their moral identity “birth right” for the morsel of “bread” or job tenure. A focus on personal/individual isomorphism adds to our understanding of moral identity, survival, and organizational politics as people struggle for power within organizations. This is a much-needed dimension of moral identity.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

This study is subject to a number of limitations on the interpretation of its results. First and foremost all measures for the constructs used in this study were derived from previous studies the purposes of which were different and which were not conducted in a highly regulated public procurement work environment. Secondly, not all item measures were developed with a moral or ethics focus. Additionally, unlike this study, the isomorphic construct has in the past been studied in a competitive business setting. This study interviewed staff handling public procurement only; the results are therefore limited to that category of staff. Accounting officers refused to cooperate in this study. Therefore, there is need to conduct a similar study using samples of other categories of employees to verify our findings. Results of this study may suffer from the community moral identity spillover effects which were largely ignored.

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