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# Exemplary Leadership and Employee Commitment in Private Health Sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between exemplary leadership and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria. An exploratory research design was adopted for the study. The data were sourced from both primary and secondary means. From the field survey, the researchers retrieved and analysed one hundred and three (103) sets of structured questionnaires using Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient to determine the association between the variables as well as the significance of the relationship existing among them. The findings revealed that the dimensions of exemplary leadership namely: model the way, inspire a shared vision, and challenge the process respectively exhibited significant relationships with employee commitment in private health sector. Therefore, it was concluded that, there is a direct and significant relationship between exemplary leadership and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt. This informed the researchers' recommendations for private health outfits on how essential exemplary leadership is to achieving sustainable competitive advantage through enhanced employee commitment.

## 1. Introduction

In modern business times every organisation must strive to not only survive, but grow and advance into a foreseeable future stronger than it is today despite the presence of competitive forces both locally and internationally. To achieve this feat in the current constantly changing business environment, these organisations must make conscious effort to not only attract, but also retain quality employees who are fully committed to the achievement of the organisational goals and objectives. Commitment is simply considered to be the intentions of an employee attached with the organization (Khan, Awang, & Ghouri, 2014). Several researches have been conducted to measure the level of commitment among employees in private and public businesses, we can therefore submit to the views of Khan et al. (2014) that commitment is recognized as one of the most important determinants of employee attachment. Hence, it is defined as the desire of employees to attach with organisation and also has a strong connection with employee behaviour and performance. Based on the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997), the TCM Employee Commitment Survey measures three forms of employee commitment to an organisation: desire-based

(affective commitment), obligation-based (normative commitment) and cost-based (continuance commitment). The survey includes three well-validated scales, the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), the Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS).

Each is scored separately and can be used to identify the “commitment profile” of employees within an organisation. Research conducted to test the three-component model of commitment has demonstrated that commitment can be characterized by different mind-sets – desire, obligation, and cost (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997). Employees with a strong affective commitment (high ACS scores) stay because they want to, those with strong normative commitment (high NCS scores) stay because they feel they ought to, and those with strong continuance commitment (high CCS scores) stay because they have to do so. From the above, employee commitment is critical to organisational success.

The impacts of the role of a leader in fostering employee commitment in any organisation can never be over-emphasised. However, studies have shown that, not much empirical studies have been carried out in relation to the relationship between exemplary leadership and employee commitment especially in the private health sector in developing economies. Therefore, this study was done to fill the identified gap in knowledge as well as contribute further to the existing body of knowledge. In carrying out this study the researchers adapted three among the five dimensions of exemplary leadership by Kouzes and Posner (2008); and Kouzes, Posner, and Biech, (2010) which are, model the way, inspire a shared vision, and challenge the process. And also employee commitment was measured with Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitments in line with the views of Meyer and Allen (1991).

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

In today’s competitive world every organisation is facing new challenges regarding sustained productivity and creating committed workforce. These days no organisation can perform at peak levels unless each employee is committed to the organisation’s objectives (Dixit & Bhati, 2012). Hence, it is important to understand the concept of commitment and its feasible outcome; as Dixit and Bhati (2012) asserts that commitment is the most challenging and researchable concept in the fields of management, and organisational behaviour.

Commitment implies an intention to persist in a course of action. Therefore, organisations often try to foster commitment in their employees to achieve stability and reduce costly turnover. It is commonly believed that committed employees will also work harder and be more likely to “go the extra mile” to achieve organisational objectives. Research has consistently demonstrated that commitment does indeed contribute to a reduction in turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). To this end, we need to appreciate the fact that, one of the key motivators for employees’

commitment is the nature and style of their leaders (supervisors and/or managers). A thorough study of leadership literatures reflects the relatively vast amount of readily available information about leader development, all lumped under the generic heading of leadership training. These literatures also show that, leadership training lead to leadership development; and this is a strategic prerequisite if any organisation desires to maximise the performance of her employees in pursuit of organisational goals and objectives. In the same direction, developing exemplary leaders is a key challenge of contemporary business owners and managers. Therefore, for any organisation to survive and grow in the current turbulent business environment, exemplary leadership is a key as today’s employees are more motivated by what you do rather than what you say. Hence, organisational leaders must make deliberate effort to practise what they preach.

### 1.2. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study was to determine and gain further insights into the relationship between the Exemplary Leadership and Employee Commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.

And our specific objectives are thus:

1. To ascertain if there is any relationship between modelling the way and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.
2. To determine if there is any relationship between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.
3. To analyse if there is any relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.

### 1.3. Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between modelling the way and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria?

### 1.4. Research Hypotheses

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between modelling the way and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.

H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment in private health sector in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria.

### 1.5. Significance of the Study

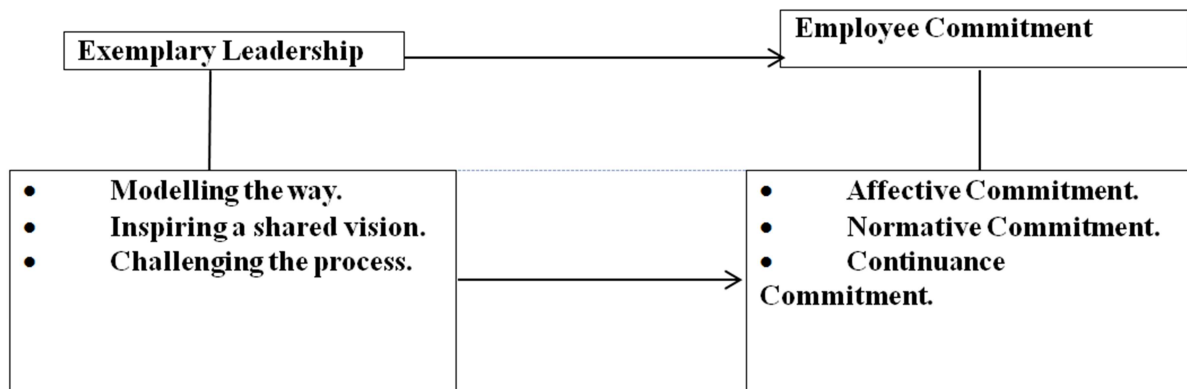
The significance of this study to the stock of existing knowledge can never be over-emphasised especially as it serves as a good source of information to academics, consultants, practitioners, and other professionals alike in relation to how exemplary leadership can impact employee commitment in private health sector in particular; and other sectors in general.

This study is also significant to managers of health facilities, as it reveals the strategic importance of effective interpersonal relationship among superiors, subordinates, and between superiors and subordinates in accomplishing organisational goals and objectives.

And this study can also serve scholars as a reference material for future research.

### 1.6. Scope of the Study

This study basically covered employees in eight (8) private health centres in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.



Source: Adapted from Kouzes and Posner (2008); Kouzes, Posner, and Biech, (2010); and Meyer and Allen (1991).

Figure 1. Operational Framework.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Concept of Exemplary Leadership

Research and experience have shown that leadership is a key consideration for managing employees and the organisation at large. Messick and Kramer (2004) argued that the degree to which the individual exhibits leadership traits depends not only on his characteristics and personal abilities, but also on the characteristics of the situation and environment in which he finds himself. This is important since human beings could become members of an organisation in order to achieve certain personal objectives, the extent to which they are active members depends on how they are convinced that their membership will enable them to achieve their predetermined objectives (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, and Nwankwere, 2011) and they also emphasised that, Leadership has one with the most dynamic effects during individual and organisational interaction. And this be why Stogdill and Coons (1957), defined leadership as the individual behaviour to guide a group to achieve the common target. Fry (2003) also explains leadership as use of leading strategy to offer inspiring motive and to enhance the staff's potential for growth and development. At this point, it is important to note that, 'The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) is conceptually based on the transformational leadership model of Kouzes and Posner (2012). Therefore in the views of Bass (1985), an exemplary leader's behaviour originates in the personal values and beliefs of the leader and

motivates subordinates to do more than is expected. Also in Burns' (1978) opinion, exemplary leadership is a process where, one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Exemplary leadership makes the follower feels trust, admiration, loyalty and respect towards the leader, and is motivated to do more than what was originally expected to do (Bass, 1985; Katz & Kahn, 1978). This type of leader motivates by making the follower more aware of the importance of task outcomes, inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organisation or team and activating their higher-order needs. He encourages followers to think critically and seek new ways to approach their jobs, resulting in intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). As a result, there is an increase in their level of performance, satisfaction, and commitment to the goals of their organisation (Podsakoff, McKenzie, & Bommer (1996).

#### 2.1.1. Modelling the Way

Leaders know that to gain commitment and to win respect they need to become exemplars of the behaviour they expect of others (Kouzes, Posner, & Biech, 2010). Hence, excellent leaders need to identify and articulate their personal values; that is what they represent. People follow people, not words on paper, so leaders must demonstrate that they stand behind their values and demonstrate that they mean what they say with action. Therefore, according to (Kouzes et al., 2010) principles that leaders establish, espouse, and live become the

standards of excellence for others to follow. The also emphasised that, The leader who sets an example creates a situation making it easier to build consensus on shared values no matter what the climate. And finally, the excellent leader is clear about his or her values and principles because he or she asks for feedback about his or her actions.

### 2.1.2. Inspiring a Shared Vision

In the words of Kouzes et al., (2010), “a vision is not about a statement; it is about the shared dream of the future”. No wonder, leaders envision the preferred future, thereby creating an ideal image of the organisation or project. And they get others behind the vision by vividly expressing their passion. Kouzes et al., (2010) are also thinking in this direction when they posit that, leaders are able to bring their vision to everyone’s level, breathing life into other individuals’ hopes and dreams. This strengthens the individuals, strengthens the team, and strengthens the vision (Kouzes et al., 2010). When leaders believe that they can make a difference, others see that the vision can be for the common good of all involved. Further studies have shown that, excellent leaders incorporate the higher meaning of their work into the vision. And this alignment helps others align with the team, the work, and the organisation.

### 2.1.3. Challenging the Process

Generally, great leaders look for ways to improve processes, for better, faster, less - expensive ways to get the work done, and they encourage the strength of the team to do it (Kouzes et al., 2010). To this end, leaders make certain that the improvement process has a strong chance of success by helping to develop a logical plan of actions and milestones that incorporates dates, goals, and accountability. To achieve the above, leaders challenge themselves to ensure that they grow and learn. And further studies have shown that, they invariably must experiment and take risks on their way to innovative improvement ideas. This means, of course, that leaders learn from their mistakes and blunders as well as from their successes and triumphs, making it possible for the rest of their team to do the same (Kouzes et al., 2010).

## 2.2. The Concept of Employee Commitment

According to David (2016), Commitment is a psychological contract, and it is commitment is imperative for organisational success. In other words, employee commitment always plays a very key role in improving the organisational performance (M-Khyzer-Bin-Dost & Noman-Shafi, 2011). They also posit that, higher level of employee commitment in the organisation for individual projects or to the business is assumed as a major reason for better organisational performance that leads to organisational success. Therefore, according to Khan et al., (2014), Commitment is simply considered to be the intentions of an employee attached with the organisation. And in the views of Meyer and Allen (1997) employee commitment is the desire of employees to remain employed with their organisation. And also according to them, it is a multidimensional concept

that has been understood in different ways. In this direction, it appears to be behavioural (Staw, 1980), normative (Allen & Meyer, 1990), calculative (Becker, 1960; and Ritzer & Trice, 1969) and attitudinal (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; and Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). And at this juncture, According to Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, (1970) commitment is the process by which the goals of the organisation and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent. While Allen & Mayer (1990) claim that commitment is “... a psychological state that bind the individual to the organisation”. Similarly, according to Meyer & Allen (1997) commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organisation and has implication for the decision to continue membership in the organisation.

### 2.2.1. Affective Commitment

Effective commitment is always a result of the core behaviour of the major employees along with their behavioural factors like turnover intention (Addae, Parboteeah, & Davis, 2006). This has to do with how much individual ‘want’ to remain in the organisation. Empirical studies have it that, employees with affective commitment continue service with organisation because they *want* to do so. This also has to do with the employee’s affective commitment to the goal and values and to the organisation for its own sake, a part from its purely instrumental worth. No wonder, according to Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, and Sincich (1993) Affective commitment refers to the degree to which an individual is psychological attach to an employing organisation through feeling such as loyalty, affection, worth, belongingness, pleasure and so on. And also affective approach has to do with “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation. Therefore in the views of Mowday et al., (1982), an individual who is affectively committed or emotionally attached to the organisation can be seen in the following light: (i) believe in the goal and values of the organisation, (ii) works hard for the organisation and (iii) intend to stay with the organization. And in a similar vein, Meyer & Allen (1996) correlates affective commitment with work experiences where employees experience psychologically comfortable feelings (such as approachable managers), increasing their sense of competence (such as feedback). Finally, in line with the various literatures reviewed on this subject we can conclude that, the development of affective commitment involves recognizing the organisation’s worth and internalising its principles and standards. As affective commitment is when individuals remain with an organisation because they want to and because they are familiar with it and they have emotional attachment with it.

### 2.2.2. Continuance Commitment

When employees get job in an organisation, they are supposed to remain with the organisation due to their awareness of certain costs associated with leaving the organisation. And some of these associate cost are; attractive

benefits, the threat of wasting the time, effort spends acquiring, and even the act of disrupting personal relationship. According to Allen & Meyer (1990), continuance commitment develops on the basis of two factors: (1) number of investment (side-bets) individuals make in their current organisation e.g. pension plans, organisation benefits, status among others; and (2) perceived lack of alternatives e.g. lack of employment alternatives also increases the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation and therefore increase the continuance commitment of employees to the organisation. Further studies show that cognitive-continuance commitment is that which occurs when there is a profit associated with continued participation and a cost associated with leaving. In the opinion of Jaros et al. (1993), Continuance commitment is the degree to which an individual experiences a sense of being locked in place because of the high cost of leaving. And it was also argued that, continuance commitment can be subdivided into high sacrifice commitment ("personal sacrifice" associated with leaving) and low alternative commitment ("limited opportunities" for other employment).

In the opinion of Meyer & Allen (1997) when an individual has the awareness or consideration about expenses and threats linked to leaving the organisation, this form of commitment is considered to be calculative. Meyer and Allen (1991) also posited that an individual who's most important connection with the organisation is based on continuance commitment stay with the organisation simply because they have no choice. Hence, Mayer, & Schoorman, (1992) argued that, Continuance commitment is the desire to remain a member of the organization.

### 2.2.3. Normative Commitment

This type of commitment develops on the basis of earlier experiences influenced by, for example family-based experiences or cultural experiences among others. Normative commitment can increase through beliefs that the employees have that employers provide more than they can give. And several empirical research have it that, the normative aspect develops as individuals' perception of their moral obligation to remain with a specific organisation, irrespective of how much status improvement or fulfilment the organisation gives the individual over the years. So, normative commitment/obligation is seen as a result of the receipt of benefits (which encourages a feeling that one should reciprocate), and/or acceptance of the terms of a psychological contract.

## 3. Methodology

This section presents the approach and procedures that were adopted in the conduct of the study as it relates to data collection and analysis.

### 3.1. Research Design

An Exploratory Research Design was adopted for two basic features; it involves review of existing literature, and it also involves respondents with practical experience in the study's areas of focus (Agbonifoh & Yomere, 1999). In addition to the above two, it also helped us to gain more insights into the relationship that exist between exemplary leadership and employee commitment (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

### 3.2. Population of the Study

The population for this study involved the employees of eight (8) selected private health centres operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. These health centres were selected out using convenience sampling method; and the human resource department within these health centres showed a total of one hundred and thirteen (113) employees. However, one hundred and three (103) responses were retrieved and found usable. The instrument for this study was proportionally distributed according to the number of staff of the various health centres. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to conduct the analyses. And the statement items used on the data collection instrument (questionnaire) were adapted from Meyer and Allen (2004), and Kouzes and Posner (2010); and the data so generated were analysed using Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient statistical tool.

### 3.3. Nature and Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. While the primary data were sourced through structured questionnaire administration, the secondary data were sourced from literatures in the form of academic journals and texts.

## 4. Result and Discussion of Findings

### 4.1. Results and Data Analysis

A Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to determine the relationship between modelling the way and employee commitment among one hundred and three (103) participants. There was a strong positive correlation between modelling the way and commitment among employees, which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .886^{**}$ ,  $p = .000$ ); this being indicative that an increased attempt by leaders in acting as models will ultimately result to an increase in commitment of employees in the organisation. This results to non-acceptance of the stated  $H_{01}$  hypothesis to state that there exists significant relationship between modelling the way as a feature of exemplary leadership and employee commitment.

**Table 1.** Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient: Test of association between the variables.

Correlations			Modelling the Way	Inspiring a shared Vision	Challenging the Process	Employee Commitment
Kendall's tau_b	Modelling the Way	Correlation Coefficient	1.000			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
		N	103			
	Inspiring a shared Vision	Correlation Coefficient	.737**	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.		
		N	103	103		
	Challenging the Process	Correlation Coefficient	.807**	.872**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
		N	103	103	103	
	Employee Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.886**	.784**	.853**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	103	103	103	103

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

Source: SPSS Output Version 20

From the table also, inspiring a shared vision reported a high positive relationship with employee commitment ( $\tau_b = .784^{**}$ ,  $n = 103$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and it is statistically significant having that  $.000 < 0.01$ ; this suggests that there exists significant relationship between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment thus we reject the stated null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) as this attribute of leaders would enhance employee commitment to the organization.

Accordingly, Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient reported a strong positive relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .853^{**}$ ,  $n = 103$ ,  $p = .000$ ); this being indicative that an increase in the attempt of leaders in challenging the status-quo within the organisation; employees become increasingly committed to their organisations. This also results to non-acceptance of the stated  $H_{03}$  hypothesis to state that there exists significant relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment.

#### 4.2. Discussion of Findings

The result of the tested  $H_{01}$  suggested that there exists significant relationship between modelling the way and employee commitment. This finding agrees with the opinion of David (2016) who posited that, there is a positive and significant association between modelling the way and employee commitment.

Accordingly the result of the tested  $H_{02}$  implies that there exists significant relationship between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment; David's (2016) finding still supports this empirical result in that his proposition aligns with it; in his opinion there is also a positive and significant association between inspiring a shared vision and employee commitment.

In the same vein, the result of the  $H_{03}$  suggests that there exists significant relationship between challenging the process and employee commitment; which agrees with Posner (2016) in his study, investigating the reliability and validity of leadership practices inventory.

## 5. Conclusions, Recommendation, and Limitations of the Study

### 5.1. Conclusion

From the findings above, this study concluded that, there is a significant relationship between exemplary leadership and employee commitment. And this can be seen in the light of the following:

Modelling the way, which means leaders/managers leading by example affect employee commitment in private health sectors. Hence, if the private health outfits must accomplish their goals and objectives, deliberate effort must be made to continuously encourage supervisors/leaders/managers to supervise/lead/manage by doing, and not just sit and give orders or directives. This will help to maintain a healthy supervisor-employee relationship in the private health sectors.

In line with the above, inspiring a shared vision among the employees also has a positive and direct relationship with employee commitment. Researches have it that, employee commitment is a necessity for any organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. Hence, for any private health outfit to attain this, her managers must be committed to inspiring a shared vision among its employees. This enhances unity of direction.

Finally, from this study it was evidently clear that challenging the process can enhance employee commitment. And this will unarguably result in better performances that will enhance organizational competitiveness.

### 5.2. Recommendations

From the aforesaid findings and conclusion reached, and for the private health sector to accomplish the desired success and exist into the foreseeable future (i.e. on the going concern principle) thereby outliving its founders; the following recommendations are made;

Leaders, managers, and/or supervisors should be encouraged to establish principles concerning the way their

employees (and even other stakeholders) should be treated as well as how set-goals should be pursued. Therefore, create standards of excellence and set an example for others to follow.

Leaders, managers, and/or supervisors should be encouraged to envision the future, creating a challenging and unique image of what the organization can become. And in doing this, they should listen to the hopes and aspirations of their employees, so that by incorporating these, the employees can participate in a shared dream about the future.

Leaders, managers, and/or supervisors should be encouraged to aspire to improve upon the status quo by searching for opportunities to grow and innovate, many of which are in the external environment. They should be good risk-takers, and thereby, gain momentum even through achieving small wins. Hence, they look at setbacks as learning opportunities, for both themselves and their employees.

### 5.3. Limitations of the Study

A number of observed limitations in this study should be addressed in subsequent studies as outlined below;

The scope of this study was eight (8) private health outfits in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Nigeria. This is small compared to the number of existing health outfits in the private sectors. Thus, further research on exemplary leadership and employee commitment should involve other outfits even in others parts of Nigeria.

Also, this study was basically done in the private sector. Thereby, it cannot be conveniently and comfortably generalised to the public sector. Therefore, further research on exemplary leadership and employee commitment should involve the public sector.

An Exploratory Research Design was adopted for this study. Therefore, subsequent studies in this area could adopt other research design(s).

The instrument used for data collection again posed a limitation to our findings, because they were structured; thus not giving chance to participants to state other issues other than ones captured in the questions. Therefore, subsequent studies should utilize other instruments to reach a more valid conclusion.

Finally, this study didn't take cognizance of any moderating variable; hence subsequent research could investigate the moderating role of other variables such as technology, organisational culture, perceived organizational support and knowledge management on such outcomes.

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