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## WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN SELECTED DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN RIVERS STATE

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### Abstract

*This study examines the relationship between workplace friendship and employee commitment in selected deposit money banks in Rivers State. Workplace friendship being the predictor variable was used as a unidimensional construct while employee commitment was measured using affective, normative and continuance commitment. Three research hypotheses were formulated for the study. The study adopted a cross sectional survey while data were generated using a structured questionnaire. The investigation focused on a population of 61 permanent and full-time staff from selected deposit money banks in Rivers State which are considered as part of the top tier in Nigeria. Given the size of the population, the study was conducted as a census, with the study emphasizing on the 61 workers as its unit of measurement within the target deposit money banks in Rivers State. Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to determine the effect of the predictor variable on the criterion variable for the study. It was found that workplace friendship positively correlated with affective, normative and continuance commitment. The study concludes that workplace friendships are a vital aspect of organisation and as such is crucial and a necessary factor in strengthening outcomes of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State. The study therefore recommends that, managers of deposit money banks should build relationships with their team members, and create an environment that is conducive to friendship.*

**Keywords:** Workplace Friendship, Employee Commitment, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Continuance Commitment

## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, employee's commitment has been seen as a major task of management. Many organisations in the countries are experiencing high rate of employee turnover, rising cost of replacing employees, pressure on remaining staffs and loss of social capital (Collins and Smith, 2006, Morell et al, 2004). Lack of commitment has been manifested by employee absenteeism and lateness to work, high turnover rate, job dissatisfaction and negative work attitudes in organisation. Nwachukwu (2006) has stated generally the negative poor attitude of Nigerian workers on performing their work. Other scholars (Okaro & Ohagwu, 2010) also reported unresolved poor satisfaction and commitment among Nigerian workers. The question on everyone's lips becomes: "What can be done to retain employees"?

The role of employee commitment in organisations is well recognized all over the world. Today, everyone seems to agree that employee commitment has become a critical issue in sustaining competitive advantage, business success and financial performance in organisations. According to Masse and Tyokaa (2014) employee commitment is vital to any business enterprise that seeks to retain valued employees and have positive business outcomes. In today's highly dynamic and competing work environment, employee commitment is regarded as an important ingredient to realizing competitive advantage. It is the emotional bond between an employee and its organization which affects their behaviour positively (Hunt et al, 1989; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Organisation cannot perform at optimum without the dedication of employees to the objectives of the organisation (Yucel, 2012; Lumley 2011; Suki, 2011). A committed employee is believed to consistently deliver beyond expectations, drive the intangible assets of the organisation, work towards the goals of the organisation and also have the interests of the organisation at heart.

Owing to the importance attached to employee's commitment, several empirical studies have been conducted around the globe on this subject (Don-Baridam, 2017; Muhammed et al, 2012; Wageeh, 2014; Amangala, 2014; Naveed et al, 2014). They have sought to examine different variables in a bid to increase employee commitment. For example, Don-Baridam (2017) examined emotional intelligence and commitment in three industrial sub-sectors in Rivers State and the results of our findings showed that there is positive and significant relationship between the two main variables of the study, namely; emotional intelligence and organizational commitment and some of the components of these variables. Muhammad et al (2012) examined the impact of organizational justice on employee commitment with moderating effect of employee work attitudes. The findings of their study showed that there is a positive relationship between organizational justice, organizational commitment and employee work attitude. Muhammad et al. (2014) conducted a study on enhancing organizational commitment through employee empowerment. The findings of their study showed a strong correlation between workers empowerment and commitment to the organisation. Wageeh (2014) investigated the employee's attitude concerning employee commitment and change in Saudi Arabia. The study found that a relationship exist between employee commitment to the organisation and change.

Other constructs on employee commitment are on withdrawal intention (Cameli and Gofen, 2005; Sommers, 1995; Hackett et al, 1994; Chen et al, 1998), communication climate and job satisfaction (Trombetta and Rogers, 1998), income and age (Ogba, 2009) and others. These studies showed that communication climate, income, job satisfaction will influence employee's commitment. In spite of the several studies and importance placed on employee commitment, studies have sadly shown that the rate of turnover among Nigerian Workers is high (Adeneyi, 2014). Research have focused on factors such as organizational justice, job

satisfaction, employees' empowerment and others as possible factors to increase employee commitment. While it is true that these factors may possibly increase employees commitment at work, one other factor is neglected, the interactions of employees and values of exchange. Given the necessary financial support and conducive environment, employees' commitment cannot be increased without appropriate social interactions between employees. Glade (2018) opined that when it comes to employee commitment, organizations should take it as a matter of priority to create a friendly environment where social interactions and communication is visible relating to the job roles and responsibilities.

Uhuru (2020) defines workplace friendship as a work environment that is characterized with social interaction and the ability of the employees to communicate this interaction in the process of executing their job roles and responsibilities in the organization. Friendships are one of the essential human values and these friendships has the ability to influence individual attitudes and behaviours either positively or negatively (Song, 2016). Ellinwood (2020) asserts that positive interpersonal relationships at work have an advantageous impact on both organization and employees. In the same manner employees' negative work attitudes can be mitigated when friends act as close confidants on bad and unpleasant work experiences (2016). Dachner (2011) declares that encouraging interpersonal relations among workers is important because valued work relationships can influence organizational outcomes by increasing institutional participation, establishing support and innovative climates thereby increasing organizational productivity.

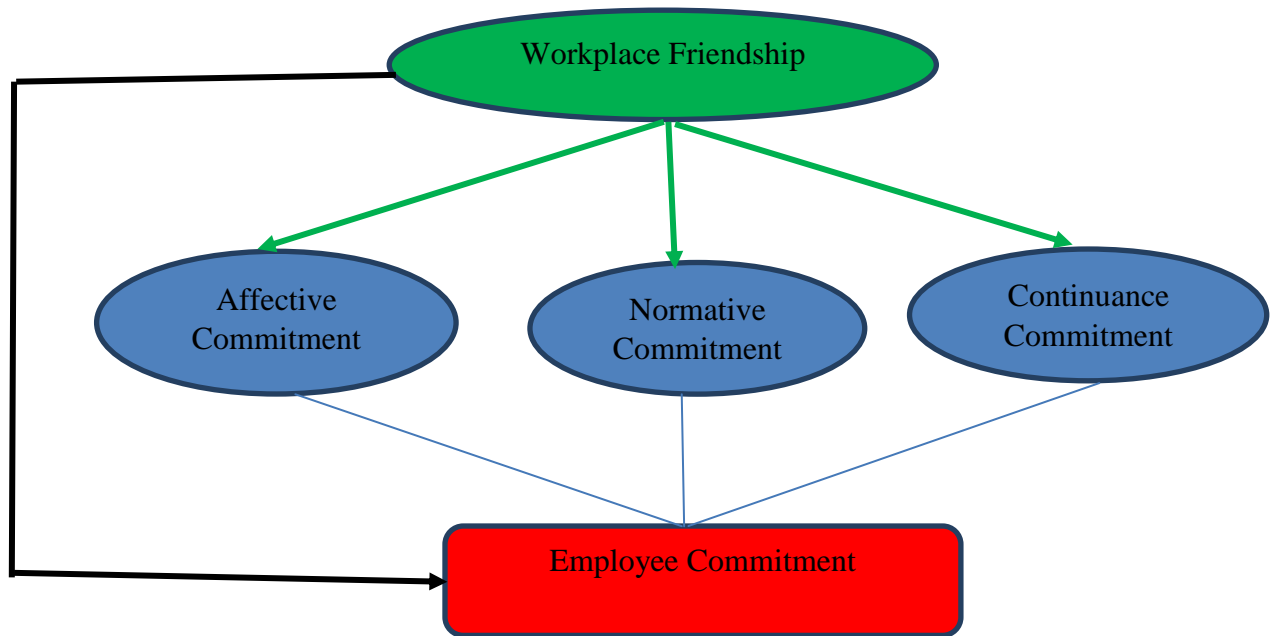
Workplace friendship has been drawing attention of and broadly discussed by many scholars (Mao et al 2012, Mille et al, 2018). Gibbons & Olk (2013) examined the impact of workplace friendship on employee performance in telecommunication firm in Kenya. Lincoln & Miller (2012) conducted a research on the impact of friendship at work and economic sustainability of oil and gas in Germany. Result showed that effective workplace friendship can create good interpersonal relationships among employees towards job attributes in the organization which enhances the sustainability of the business's social identity. Frankovsy (2019) examined the impact of workplace friendship and job satisfaction in Ethiopia. It was revealed that workplace friendship helped worker's create an atmosphere of love, mutuality, responsiveness and trust which commands a level of satisfaction from workers concerning their jobs.

From the foregoing, we find from the plethora of literature on workplace friendship and its constructs (i.e. job satisfaction, economic sustainability, organisation citizenship behaviour etc) that there is no much studies on workplace friendship and employee commitment. This research contribution is further premised on the observations that current studies on this subject have been carried out in other parts of world particularly the western world. Findings of these works are yet to be domesticated to the African and most importantly the Nigerian environment (Adeneyi, 2000; Gbadamosi, 2003). Most papers on the subject are theoretical and in some cases speculative with little empirical support particularly in Africa, as there is little empirical studies on workplace friendship and commitment. Based on the identified gap in the literature, this paper intends to examine workplace friendship and employee commitment in selected money deposit banks in Rivers State.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study captures the relationship between two major variables; workplace friendship (predictor variable) and employee commitment (criterion variable). workplace friendship is operationalized as a unidimensional construct while employee commitment is operationalized herein as comprising of three measures

namely: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. The relationship is presented as a unidirectional one as it depicts workplace friendship as impacting on employee commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State. The arrows depicted in the figure 1 indicate the flow and direction of effect; while the connecting lines indicate corresponding measures.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework for the relationship between workplace friendship and employee commitment

**Source:** Researchers desk (2023).

### **Purpose of this paper**

The purpose of this study is to investigate:

1. To examine the relationship between workplace friendship and affective commitment in selected money deposit bank in Rivers State.
2. To examine the relationship between workplace friendship and normative commitment in selected money deposit bank in Rivers State.
3. To examine the relationship between workplace friendship and continuance commitment in selected money deposit banks in Rivers State

## **LITERATURE VIEW**

### **Theoretical foundation**

#### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

This paper is premised on the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory was developed by Homans (1961) and later improved upon by Pfeffer (1982). The theory holds that human behaviour is social interactions that are hinged on the exchange of both tangible and intangible activities that occurs between individuals. The theory further posits that behaviour compliance of individuals is part of the exchange for something which is perceived to be

contingent on the individual's behaviour or activities within them. The theory posits that the exchange of ideas and opinions between individuals in the organization creates the opportunity for the share of knowledge on issues relating to the work environment Nunkoo (2016) opined that social exchange theory presents a stronger logical base to explain the concept of employee commitment.

### **Concept of Workplace Friendship**

Workplace friendship is related not only to employee perception of people but probably to the perception of job and thus affects employees' work motivation (Mao et al, 2012) it is sometimes hard to overcome the challenges of managing workplace friendship. Workplace friendship represents potential threats to the self-concept of friends if they obtain differential outcomes; they involve the exchange of incompatible resources and they represent contrasting norms of reciprocity. The emotional bond between colleagues may not overwhelm the competition; they face over who are getting promoted. Workplace friendship brings benefits but may also intensify some relational costs (Ingram & Zhou, 2020). In Addition, workplace friendships are defined as non-exclusive workplace relations that involve mutual trust, commitment, reciprocal liking and shared interests or values (Blieszner and Adams 2020). This study's definition allows for a broad range of specific friendship relationships. To Lee and Park (2020) the friendships that develop in the workplace are called blended friendship.

Despite the lack of consensus on the meaning of the term workplace friendship, scholars have distinguished the unique relationships from other types of workplace relationships as being voluntary and having a personality focus (Wright, 2016). Workplace friends voluntarily spend more time with each other, share information and provide support beyond that prescribed by formal organizational roles (Sias, 2019).

### **Concept of Employee Commitment**

Employee commitment is one of the most commonly researched areas in industrial relations and organizational behaviour (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Employee commitment is seen to be a key determining factor of organizational effectiveness and performance. It has been revealed by the studies that Employee commitment has the ability to envisage various organizational outcomes, such as improved job performance, lower turnover and withdrawal intentions, lower absenteeism rate, and better organizational citizenship behaviour (Brown, Hillman, & Okun, 2012). In similar vein, Gutierrez et al (2012) pointed out that committed employees that are extremely motivated to give their time and energy to the achievement of organizational goals are gradually seen as the primary asset available to an organization. Employee commitment is the emotional bond or attachment between the employees and their organization (Don-Baridam, 2017).

The concept of employee commitment has been defined by Numerous Scholars (Meyer & Allen, 1991), but the common notion of all the definitions is that the Employee commitment is the emotional bond or attachment between the employees and their organizations. It is the strength of an individual's recognition with, and involvement in a certain organization which can be described by three factors: a strong belief and acceptance to the goals and values of the organization which is known as affective commitment, a readiness to exert significant effort on behalf of the organization, which is commonly known as normative commitment and finally a strong desire to remain employed in the organization, represented as continuance commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) define employee commitment as a psychological construct that is characteristic of member's relationship with the organization

and has implications for the individual's decision to continue membership in the organization.

**Affective commitment:** Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to identification with and involvement in, the organization (Based on positive feelings, or emotions towards the organization) in this case, an individual strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization. This is the ideal "happy" state for an individual. The most prevalent approach to employee commitment in the literature is one in which commitment is considered an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization.

**Normative commitment:** Normative commitment refers to an employee's feeling of obligation to remain with the organization (Based on the employee having internalized the values and goals of the organization) the individual remains with an organization because of feelings of obligation. For instance, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels obliged to stay with the organization to "repay the debt." Normative commitment reflects perceived obligations to remain in the organization. It is based on a feeling of gratitude towards the organization for the inducements received i.e. socialization, training and professional growth that prevents employees from looking for other employment alternatives

**Continuance commitment:** Continuance commitment refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization (due to the high cost of leaving). The individual remains with an organization because of a perceived loss of sunken costs. The individual believes that he has invested a great deal of effort/ time and has to remain in the organization. Kanter (1968) for example, defined cognitive continuance commitment as that which occurs when there is a profit associated with continued participation and a cost associated with leaving.

### **Workplace friendship and Employee commitment**

According to Latt (2008), organisation success is based on employee commitment to organizational values, principles, beliefs and goals. These principles define the organization's fundamental road map in which it operates. Previous scholarly works have revealed that workplace friendship is an important tool which can make employees to be more committed to their responsibilities in an organisation (Kimber and Lipton, 2006; Jones, 2003). As an important aspect of organizational life, workplace friendship can provide employees with a sense of belonging at work, boosts in cooperation, creativity and work innovation which has concomitant effect on the increase in the level of commitment by employee (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Methoot et al, 2017).

For a while, scholars have therefore viewed workplace friendship through "rose-tinted glasses" assuming workplace friendship to be an almost exclusive positive phenomenon. Recently however, scholars have started to question this exclusively positive perspective of workplace friendships (Methot et al, 2016). Workplaces are grounded in norms and expectations of instrumentality and impartiality, whereas friendships are based on norms of affection and favouritism (Bridge & Baxter, 1992). These conflicting norms and expectations can become an excessive demand for employees involved in workplace friendship (Dietz & Fasbender, 2022). Employees may feel overwhelmed because they cannot reconcile the norms and expectations of their role as "employee" and their role as "friend" and react with

deviant work behaviours toward co-worker which may affect the level of their commitment to the job. Based on the above discussions, it was hypothesized that:

- H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no relationship between workplace friendship and affective commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State.
- H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no relationship between workplace friendship and continuance commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State.
- H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no relationship between workplace friendship and normative commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State.

### METHODOLOGY

This research was designed as a correlational study and was based on a cross-sectional time horizon for its investigation. The investigation focused on a population of 61 permanent and full-time staff from selected deposit money banks in Rivers State which are considered as part of the top tier in Nigeria. Given the size of the population, the study was conducted as a census, with the study emphasizing on the 61 workers as its unit of measurement within the target deposit money banks in Rivers State. Data for the study was generated using the structured questionnaire with instrumentation based on previous research and the adaptation of instruments to suit the context of the Nigerian banking sector. Workplace friendship was in adapted in line with assessing social interactions, and informal exchanges within the context of the organization (Mao et al, 2012; Wright, 2016); while employee commitment was based on the affective, continuance and normative commitment behaviour in the workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Presented in table 1 is the result for the reliability test for the instruments adapted in the measurement of the variables.

**Table 1:** Cronbach alpha reliability test

Variables	Measures	No. of Items	Alpha Coefficients
Workplace Friendship		6	0.804
Employee Commitment	Affective Commitment	5	0.827
	Continuance Commitment	6	0.799
	Normative Commitment	6	0.862

Source: Research Data, 2023

### DATA FINDINGS

The result for the data analysis for this research is presented in this section of the paper. Instrument administration for the study is reported to have a 97% success with only two copies observed to have error issues of missing sections. Hence, the study utilized 59 copies, which after assessment were considered as suitable for the study. The results are presented in two sections - (a) the univariate result and (b) the bivariate result.

**Univariate Result:** The summary distribution for the data on the variables - workplace friendship and employee commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment), presented in table 2-5.

**Table 2: Univariate Analysis for Workplace Friendship**

Constructs	Items	Mean	S.D	Grand Mean
<b>Workplace Friendship</b>	I have formed strong friendship at work	3.982	1.0936	
	In my organization I have the opportunity to talk informally and visit with others	4.058	.9233	
	I have the opportunity to develop close friendship at my Workplace	3.813	1.1318	
	Communication among employees is encouraged in my organization	3.917	1.0284	
	Being able to see my coworkers is one reason I look forward to my Job	4.131	.9123	
	Informal talk is tolerated by my organization as long as the work is completed.	3.630	1.1025	<b>3.9511</b>

**Source:** SPSS Output, 2023.

The Table 2 above illustrates the distribution for the constructs of the study based on summaries obtained from their manifest properties. The distributions for the variable demonstrate evident levels of agreement to the properties and manifestations of the constructs; where mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ) are observed to range mostly between  $\bar{x} = 3.0 - 4.0$ , it is evident that workplace friendship being the predictor have a grand mean of ( $\bar{x} = 3.9511$ ). This shows workplace friendship is substantial and well manifested realities within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Univariate Analysis for Affective Commitment**

Constructs	Items	Mean	S.D	Grand Mean
<b>Affective commitment</b>	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in the organization	3.899	1.1100	
	I really feel as if this organisations problems are my own	3.820	1.1328	
	I do not feel emotionally attached to the organization	3.786	1.2422	
	This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	3.813	1.0734	
	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization	3.813	1.1560	<b>3.8930</b>

**Source:** SPSS Output, 2023.

The Table 3 above illustrates the distribution for the constructs of the study based on summaries obtained from their manifest properties. The distributions for the variable demonstrate evident levels of agreement to the properties and manifestations of the constructs; where mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ) are observed to be  $\bar{x} = 3.0$ . It is evident that affective commitment has a grand mean of ( $\bar{x} = 3.8930$ ). This shows affective commitment is substantial and well manifested realities as a measure of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State.



**Table 4: Univariate Analysis for Continuance Commitment**

Constructs	Items	Mean	S.D	Grand Mean
<b>Continuance commitment</b>	It would be very hard for me to leave my job at this organisation right now even if I wanted to.	3.813	1.0734	<b>3.8349</b>
	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I leave my organisation.	3.813	1.1560	
	Right now, staying with my job at this organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire	4.110	1.0854	
	I believe I have too few to consider leaving this organization	3.920	1.0151	
	One of the few negative consequences of leaving my job at this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternative elsewhere	3.899	1.0445	
	One of the major reasons I continue to work for the organisation is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice.	3.758	1.0738	

**Source:** SPSS Output, 2023

The Table 4 above illustrates the distribution for the constructs of the study based on summaries obtained from their manifest properties. The distributions for the variable demonstrate evident levels of agreement to the properties and manifestations of the constructs; where mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ) are observed to be  $\bar{x} = 3.0$ . It is evident that continuance commitment has a grand mean of ( $\bar{x} = 3.8349$ ). This shows continuance commitment is substantial and well manifested realities as a measure of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Univariate Analysis for Normative Commitment**

Constructs	Items	Mean	S.D	Grand Mean
<b>Normative Commitment</b>	I do not feel obligation to remain with my organisation.	3.917	1.0284	<b>3.9123</b>
	Even if I were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave	4.131	.9123	
	I would feel guilty if I left this organisation now	3.630	1.1025	
	This organisation deserves my loyalty	3.899	1.1100	
	I would not leave any organisation right now because of my sense of obligation to it.	3.820	1.1328	
	I owe a great deal to this organisation	3.786	1.2422	

**Source:** SPSS Output, 2023

The Table 5 above illustrates the distribution for the constructs of the study based on summaries obtained from their manifest properties. The distributions for the variable demonstrate evident levels of agreement to the properties and manifestations of the constructs; where mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ) are observed to be  $\bar{x} = 3.0$ . It is evident that normative commitment has a grand mean of ( $\bar{x} = 3.9123$ ). This shows normative commitment is substantial and well manifested realities as a measure of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

**Bivariate Result:** The test for the bivariate relations between the variables is addressed in this section. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was utilized in

the analysis of the relationship between the variables. Where hypothetical statements are tested at the 95% confidence interval, the criterion for significance is thus based on a  $P < 0.05$ . Presented in table 6 is the result for the hypotheses test.

**Table 6: Test for Hypotheses**

		Workplace Friendship	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Workplace Friendship	Pearson Correlation	1	.826**	.723**	.761**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	59	59	59	59
Affective Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.826**	1	.629**	.716**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	59	59	59	59
Continuance Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.629**	1	.865**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	59	59	59	59
Normative Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.761**	.716**	.865**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	59	59	59	59

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

Source: Research Data, 2023

The test for the relationship between the variables (table 6) illustrates the significance of workplace friendship to outcomes of affective commitment ( $R = 0.826$  and  $P = 0.000$ ), continuance commitment ( $R = 0.723$  and  $P = 0.000$ ) and normative commitment ( $R = 0.761$  and  $P = 0.000$ ). This positions workplace friendship as capable of predicting outcomes of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State; hence, all stated null hypothetical statements of no significant relationship between the variables are rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research affirm to the views of previous scholars (Jones, 2003; Methoot et al, 2017) on the significance to workers social well-being and effectiveness. Jones (2003) identified the development of friendship as a fundamental social action which demonstrates the individuals need for social placement and belongingness. According to Jones (2003), friendships in the workplace enhance the workers sense of membership, acceptance and meaning - key factors which also motivate workers to perform better and to be more supportive of significant others in their workplace. In the same vein, such levels of bonding create a sense of responsibility and duty, not only to one's inner circle of friends, but also to the organization as well.

The findings of this study, reinforce the position of workplace friendship as being fundamental to a healthy and meaningful workplace setting; enabling a more relaxed and less tensed environment suitable for workers social wellbeing. This validates the underpinning assumptions of the social exchange theory (Nunkoo, 2016) adopted as the theoretical foundation in this research, anchoring related tenets within the context of the deposit money banks and demonstrating the relevance of such toward understanding the significance and imperatives of workplace friendship to outcomes of affective, continuance and normative commitment. In this regard, it is affirmed that creating and advancing workplace conditions

that allow for friendships, is crucial and a necessary factor in strengthening outcomes of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Workplace friendships are a vital aspect of organisation and as such is crucial and a necessary factor in strengthening outcomes of employee commitment within the context of deposit money banks in Rivers State. Therefore, Organizations that foster and encourage these friendships reap the benefits of increased productivity, job satisfaction, and employee retention. Creating a culture that promotes workplace friendships is not only beneficial to the organization, but also to the individuals who work there. Investing in workplace friendships is an investment in the success of the organization and the happiness of its employees. Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommends were made:

- i. Managers of deposit money banks should build relationships with their team members, and create an environment that is conducive to friendship.
- ii. Deposit money banks should foster a culture of trust and openness, which would encourage employees to form strong bonds with each other.
- iii. Deposit money banks should establish mentorship programs, employee resource groups, or social events and also create a buddy system for new employees, or provide opportunities for employees to get to know each other outside of work.

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