

Leaders' Social Support and Employee Commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service

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Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between leaders' social support and employee commitment. The study population consisted of twenty-five thousand, seven hundred and eighty-nine (25,789) civil servants drawn from the States' Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) Program report of 2021. The study adopted a simple size of three hundred and ninety-four (394) civil servants. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the data and the findings revealed that leaders' social support significantly influence employee commitment. It is concluded that leaders' social support positively and significantly relates to employee commitment. The study recommended that in a bit to improve employee commitment, Bayelsa state civil service and their leaders should increase staff engagement to the ministries and civil servants' loyalty. This will also decrease stress levels and make civil servants more devoted without fear of retribution or discrimination.

Keywords: Social support, employee commitment, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment.

1.1 Introduction

Organizational commitment is the bond which connects employees with the company or business (Schweizer & Patzelt, 2012). Multiple research projects have proven that organizational commitment prevents the most common problems such as absenteeism, organizational citizenship, performance and turnover. One of the main factors of employee commitment within an organization is extra role behaviour. This is when employees exceed their scope of work and do something different. The management is mainly supporting the actions taken by the employees; and this shows that they are passionate and enthusiastic about the company.

Organizational commitment can lead to positive effects like decreased absenteeism and enhances and boosts job satisfaction (Shin et al., 2015). They noted that, if a company has been successful in recruiting the right type of people and has offered the right workplace conditions, the engagement of workers will be very much determined by the dynamics between employees and with immediate and upper managers (Chaudhry & Shah, 2011).

However, employees in Nigeria civil service have continued to experience several issues in the workplace. According to Abdirahman (2018) some notable challenges confronting civil servants include in-conducive work environment, absence of social support, absence of motivation packages, staff are not recognized, etc. Abdirahman (2018) opined that one way of fostering employee commitment is to design and execute tested and trusted work life balance programs. Cohen and Wills (1985) reported that leaders' social support exerted a buffering effect on subordinates' occupational stress. Jansen et al. (2016) findings indicated a positive link between leaders' social support and employees' innovative behaviors. Leaders can also drive organizational behavior, and social reinforcement is important for the health of staff, their own satisfaction, and organizational performance. Leaders' social support includes leaders' support and resources for subordinates in the form of emotional, informational and instrumental. There is also evidence to support the social capital of the leaders to impact employee satisfaction and performance. Supportive leadership leads to a better work environment that promotes employees' psychological wellbeing and productivity (Kelloway & Barling, 2021). The findings of their research highlight that when managers give emotional attention, employees are engaged and less burned out.

There are different social interventions available from leaders. Emotional support is empathy and knowledge, informational support is guidance and advice, while instrumental support means physical help with getting things done. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2021) reported in their meta-analysis that the three forms of support all correlated well with worker outcomes, with emotional support as the strongest predictor of job satisfaction. The link between leaders' social support and the mental health of workers has also received more attention. More recent papers, like Liu et al. (2023), stress that good leadership reduces the negative effects of work stress. They find that workers who think their bosses are kind show lower levels of anxiety and depression, and they have a happier work environment.

Leaders' social support also contributes to organizational engagement. According to Xu and Huang (2022), workers who were socially supported by their managers tend to demonstrate organizational citizenship practices, which promote the wellbeing of the organization. In addition, social support is associated with higher team performance, due to its cooperation and non-confrontational effect (Zhang et al., 2023). Despite the benefits of social support, it has been argued that leaders do not always manage social support well. Gagné and Deci (2021), noted that workload and culture are some reasons preventing leaders from providing sufficient social support to their staff. They suggested that companies need to establish contexts where managers are empowered to spend more time with their workers. In view of

the above, this study seeks to examine the relationship between Leaders social support and employee commitment in Bayelsa State Civil Service.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The shortage of qualified personnel within the civil service in Bayelsa state is a menace plaguing the Service. There is usually mass movement of competent and experienced professionals from the civil service to the private sector or they move abroad where there is better remuneration (Ejumudo, 2014; Orogbu et al., 2016). This has caused work overload for those who chose to stay back; a situation that has made work so burdensome and tiring. Many civil servants feel their output is not commensurate with their pay and this has negatively impacted on their morale and commitment to the Service. In addition, unqualified people are appointed or promoted to undeserving positions, while qualified people are neglected or redeployed to other ministries due to favoritism. This has also worsened the problem of employee commitment within the civil service (Ishaq, 2014; Nwinyokpugi, 2015).

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. To what extent does leaders' social support relate with affective commitment in Bayelsa State civil service?
- ii. To what extent does leaders' social support relate with continuance commitment in Bayelsa State civil service?
- iii. To what extent does leaders' social support relate with normative commitment in Bayelsa State civil service?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following null research hypotheses were formulated and were tested:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and affective commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and continuance commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and normative commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Social support

Social support is a crucial approach employed to manage stress, enhance one's health, lessen pressures, and freely discuss thoughts and issues pertaining to one's professional and personal affairs, which eventually effects one's ability to remain in a career for an extended period of time (Ferguson et al., 2012).

According to House (1981) and Thoits (1985), social support is the communication that reroutes concern, empathy, emotional support, and the support in problem solving with practical assistance and useful knowledge. supportive behaviours convey to the individuals that they are valuable members of the organization and will be treated with respect and decency (Vitanov et al., 2001). A sort of socioemotional outcome called social support motivates organizations to act in ways that benefit people positively. It recommends that a company fosters employee expectations for potential rewards in the future. The social support of the company gives its employees a clear understanding that they are valued employees who are treated with dignity (Shore et al., 2001) Saks (2006), opined that social support also helps to motivate employees towards good mutuality since the organization's supporting behaviours help to build people's trust and expectations, which in turn help to produce better

work outputs. He observed that social support from leaders encourages followers to perform well and stay devoted to their profession.

According to Chen et al. (2017) and Sinokki et al. (2009), social support as a responsive resource that helps and shields people in all kinds of ways, including the ones that benefit them, like their wellbeing and self-understanding. Uchino (2004) classified social support functions into three groups: instrumental, informational, and emotional. Support that is material, semi-material or informational is called instrumental support; support that is emotional is called comparatively abstract support. It was acquired by loving or caring for others (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Social support, in the end, would make someone stronger.

Social support is an attempts to demonstrates care or assist others in reducing uncertainty or stress as well as to demonstrate that they are appreciated and cared for (Barnes & Duck, 1994; Walther & Boyd, 2002). An individual can publish a motivating message, support other people's viewpoints, take part in a helpful social action, and other similar actions on a social media platform to express social support (Mendes et al., 2018).

Social support often refers to a person's capacity to advice and counsel in relation to the social environment; this capacity is attained through intensive social engagement and communication. (Vaux & Harrison, 1985)

Social support is the idea that someone in a social network can get help from others. Social trust broadens the breadth of available social support in a high-trust environment (Sendroiu & Upenieks, 2020).

According to Lawler (2001), people's positive emotions will be stimulated by the social support they receive from regular interaction which encourages them for further interaction. This will increase people's perception of the cohesiveness of their social networks and strengthen the "in-group" social trust that results from it (Lawler, 2001).

Sharma (2023) referred to social support as the interactive process by which a person feels and experiences being loved, appreciated, and a part of a social network of mutual support and commitment. Emotional, practical, informative, or evaluative help are all examples of social support. Indicators of the perceived social support system's effectiveness are frequently based on perceptions of social networks' capacity to offer social support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). One of the most intriguing areas of research nowadays is social support. It helps a lot to have the friendships, family and teachers that make one successful in life. Social support determines commitment among leaders and workers. If an organization is to succeed and grow, then it is necessary to support and protect the health of all its employees. According to Okojie et al. (2023) as cited in COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), Social support is crucial since it increases employee loyalty and engagement in businesses. It can be used as a strategy of motivation to encourage workers to be dedicated to reaching both professional and personal goals. Employees feel confident making decisions and experience less anxiety at work when they see their social relationships as supportive (Park et al., 2018). They work hard and strive to achieve personal and organizational goals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Kahn (1990) argued that high levels of employee commitment are a result of supportive interpersonal and working environments. Building commitment requires trust and social support to function. Because of this, workers who perceive their workplace as more unified, supportive, and engaging will be content with and committed to their work (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employees who get social support from their workplace are more dedicated and committed (Okojie et al., 2023).

Humphrey et al. (2007) said that social support demonstrates how willingly an organization provides possibilities for help, which are presumably necessary for employee commitment. Also, May et al. (2004) viewed social support as a condition that affects employee commitment and has identified supportive relationships between coworkers and managers as good signs of psychological safety.

Wu et al. (2020) explained that having a supporting leader increases staff engagement to the company, whereas having a leader without supportive traits decreases employee loyalty. Stress levels decrease and employees become more devoted when they are free to communicate their thoughts and feelings without fear of retribution or discrimination (Wu et al., 2020). A study by Kiema-Junes et al. (2020) revealed that workers become more devoted and interested in their work when they feel encouragement from their employer.

2.2 Employee Commitment

Armstrong (2006) opined that commitment is an attitude that employees have toward factors like compensation, recognition, progress, and working conditions, among other things, in the context of the workplace. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), a person's mental state and degree of identification with a particular organization are what bind them together (Mowday et al., 1979). An employee's attitude toward their organization is fundamentally what defines their dedication to the company.

A single element can affect all three dimensions of commitment, according to Khan and Iqbal (2020), who also said that employee impression of commitment is the most crucial component in determining commitment. An individual might, for instance, have separate commitment targets for his team, coworkers, supervisor, and upper management. To increase employee commitment, it is vital to comprehend the factors that influence each commitment component that has a positive or bad effect, as the organization's commitment idea is a multidimensional concept. Consider a scenario where a person is selected to take part in a training program. As a result of the organization's assistance as well as a sense of obligation stemming from the training benefits reciprocation, spending time learning new job-related skills might now develop a desire and a duty.

According to Visanh and Xu (2018), an essential element that contributes to the organization's successful and efficient operation and, in turn, to the achievement of the firm's goals, is the dedication of the workforce. Employee turnover within the company rises because of the employees' constant hunt for greener employment opportunities. Low turnover is a result of employees' loyalty to the company. Ampomah and Cudjor (2015) said when a bright employee departs the company, productivity, morale, and training costs all suffer. According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), commitment acts as a motivating factor that ties workers to a series of crucial actions that advance one or more goals. They proposed that the binding, which they viewed as the commitment's most crucial result, is the preservation of the link or relationship with the purpose of the commitment. When opposed to employees who are not devoted to a company, committed employees remain longer or work longer with that company. When there are no other employment opportunities and the cost of leaving the company is greater than the benefit of remaining, employees tend to stay longer at the company. Dixit and Bhati (2012) include time loss, energy expended on acquisition, enticing perks, and disruption of personal relationships as the costs associated with leaving.

2.3 Affective Commitment

Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi (2019), defined affective commitment as an emotional bond that allows employees to identify with and take part in the business. Hassi (2018) and Hassi (2019), explained that firms that make an effort to instill in their workforces a strong sense of

responsibility for preserving all company principles and placing organizational goals first will see an increase in affective commitment. According to Modau et al. (2018), People who experience emotional commitment want to live off just one job. "Effective commitment" refers to an employee's ability to continue working for a company because they value and desire to do that work. Psychological ties to the organization contribute to employees' affective commitment, which keeps them working there.

An emotional connection between employees and their employers is known as affective commitment (AC), and it refers to the likelihood that workers won't leave those employers on their own volition (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Employees' emotional ties to the company are referred to as affective commitment, which also refers to the idea that employees should share a sense of belonging and identification with the company. It illustrates the likelihood that employees won't quit their jobs on their own (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

2.4 Continuance Commitment

Armstrong (2006) indicates that commitment is a perception (regarding the job), a frame of mind of employees towards the circumstances of compensation, recognition, advancement, and work conditions, among others. A person's level of affiliation with and acceptance into a certain organization is what matters (Mowday et al., 1979). Continuance commitment depends on whether an employee wants to remain in the organization while also keeping in mind the cost of going away and why they would because it is a "Nontransferable Investment". Retirement, friendships with colleagues, great company assets – these are all nontransferable investment units (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The continuance commitment comprised of a number of years employment; the unique benefits received by the employees from the organization (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Employees that are committed to staying put think about the drawbacks of leaving the company and decide against leaving. Even though it is seen negatively by organizations, the continuing commitment does not necessarily signify a bad scenario. When compared to affective commitment inside the organization, the continuance commitment is modest (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Khan et al. (2021) argued that the two sources of continuation commitment antecedents are alternatives and investment. Employees' time, money, and effort that they invest over time and while working for a company are investment sources. Employees that have a strong commitment to staying with the company therefore consider these investments they have made before departing. Strongly committed employees stick with the company because they need to do so to survive. An employee's commitment to staying with the company is influenced by their understanding that leaving would be a loss for them (Meyer et al., 1993). Continuance committed by employees, because of the uncertainty that comes with quitting and the potential loss of revenue, frequently decide to stay with the company. It demonstrates that the worker has given the expense, dangers, and rewards of quitting the company some thought (Habeeb, 2019; Hoang et al., 2022; Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997). Continuance commitment happens because of calculated consideration by the employee as to the need to remain working with the organization.

2.5 Normative Commitment

The normative commitment antecedents, Khan and Khan (2022) stated, are the exchange of leader with member (leader-member exchange), the appraisal for workers as meeting their needs and serving as the foundation for self-worth, emotional assistance, and affinity need (Oh & Sawang, 2021; Shafiq et al., 2021). They listed the factors of normative commitment to be the employee onboarding in the organization, socialization from family, society and through employee social contacts (Bhatti et al., 2019).

Bozdogan (2023) believed that A person who has internalized certain views is said to have a normative commitment, which is a commitment that is in line with the corporate mission, goals, policies, and practices. According to Wiener (1982), an evidence of the "organizational identity" process is the fact that such a person-organization values the harmony that exists between them. Employees put out a high level of devotion because they are adamant that it is the right thing to do in terms of morality and ethics. These consist of close relationships with coworkers, pension benefits, years of service, career progression, and specialized knowledge. By eliminating the hope of finding better employment elsewhere, normative commitment also helps. An employee's psychological condition that ties them to a company and affects whether they decide to stay or go is reflected in the commitment aspect. A sense of duty for a person to stay with the organization is referred to as normative commitment. A worker has a duty to fulfill his employer in the shape of this normative commitment. Employees who are highly engaged to this normative commitment have a tendency to stick with the company because they feel obligated to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The term "normative commitment" describes the duty and loyalty to stick with the organization. Since the employee feels bound to stay with the company because of what they have benefited from and/or are benefiting from, it is assumed that there is a sense of reciprocity. Or even what the company receives from them in return. The company may provide advantages in the form of incentives, training, or other welfare programs (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). He explained that although sharing many similarities with affective commitment, normative commitment has received less attention than the other two dimensions of commitment, namely affective and continuation. Normative commitment, they contend, has a dual character and shows itself in many ways depending on the strength of the other elements in an employee's commitment profile, refuting this assertion. They contend that moral obligation or a sense of obligation are two ways in which normative commitment can be perceived, each of which has a different effect on how employees behave at work.

3.0 Methodology

The population of this study is made up of all civil servants from twenty-two (22) ministries in Bayelsa state who are captured in the Report of 2021 Biometrics Register. For this, the study population is twenty-five thousand, seven hundred and eighty-nine (25,789) civil servants. This figure is obtained from the States' Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) Program report of 2021. The study adopted a simple random sampling technique and derived a sample size of three hundred and ninety-four(394) civil servants.

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses to address the relationship between leaders' social support and the measures of employee commitment are listed as follows:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and affective commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and continuance commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between leaders' social support and normative commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

The relationship between leaders' social support and the measures of employee commitment is revealed to be significant at a 0.05 level of significance. The relationship between the variables shows that at a rho = 0.613 and P = 0.05; leaders' social support significantly enhances and drives affective commitment, at a rho = 0.924 and P = 0.05; leaders' social

support significantly enhances and contribute towards continuance commitment, and at a $\rho = 0.124$ and $P = 0.05$; leaders' social support significantly impacts on the civil servants' support for their ministries' goals and involves various levels of involvement, identification, and loyalty.

This finding points to the relationship between social support by leaders and commitment on the part of employees. The results of the study show the utility and need for leaders' social support in motivating civil servants in Bayelsa state civil service; and the following test results for the bivariate hypotheses are given according to the observed result of the tests:

- i. Leaders' social support is significantly associated with affective commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.
- ii. Leaders' social support is significantly associated with continuance commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.
- iii. Leaders' social support is significantly associated with normative commitment in Bayelsa State civil service.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Leaders' social support and affective commitment

The outcome on the relationship between social support and employee commitment contributes to the body of knowledge about the efficacy of social support in shaping outcomes (affective, continuance and normative commitments) of employee commitment. According to Chen et al. (2017) and Sinokki et al. (2009), social support is seen as an adaptive resource that protects and helps people in a variety of ways, including those that are advantageous to them such as their mental health and self-concept. People's positive emotions will be stimulated by the social support they receive from regular interaction, and these emotions will act as reinforcement stimuli to encourage further interaction. This will increase people's perception of the cohesiveness of their social networks and strengthen the "in-group" social trust that results from it (Lawler, 2001). Sharma (2023) referred to social support as the interactive process by which a person feels and experiences being loved, appreciated, and a part of a social network of mutual support and commitment. Emotional, practical, informative, or evaluative help are all examples of social support. Indicators of the perceived social support system's effectiveness are frequently based on perceptions of social networks' capacity to offer social support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

4.2 Leaders' social support and continuance commitment

The thrust of the present finding fills the gap in literature by offering tentative solutions to the problems of how and why social support influences and enhances employee commitment. Social support is crucial since it increases employee loyalty and engagement in businesses. It can be used as a strategy of motivation to encourage workers to be dedicated to reaching both professional and personal goals. Employees are more likely to feel confident making decisions and experience less anxiety at work when they see their social relationships as supportive (Park et al., 2018).

4.3 Leaders' social support and normative commitment

Kahn (1990) argued that high levels of employee commitment are a result of supportive interpersonal and working environments. Building commitment requires trust and social support to function. Because of this, workers who perceive their workplace as more unified, supportive, and engaging will be content with and committed to their work (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employees who get support from their workplace are more committed (Okojie et al., 2023). Wu et al. (2020) explained that having a supporting leader increases staff engagement to the company, whereas having a leader without supportive traits decreases employee

loyalty. Stress levels decrease and employees become more devoted when they are free to communicate their thoughts and feelings without fear of retribution or discrimination (Wu et al., 2020). A study by Kiema-Junes et al. (2020) revealed that workers become more devoted and interested in their work when they feel encouragement from their employer.

5.0 Conclusion

The relationship between leaders' social support and employee commitment is revealed to be positive and significant. The findings of this study demonstrate the role of leaders' social support as critical for the employees' level of affective, continuance, and normative commitment. In line with the results, the study concludes as follows:

Leaders' social support which ensures communication that reroutes concern, empathy, emotional support, and problem solving with practical assistance and useful knowledge contributes toward improved employee commitment such as affective, continuance, and normative commitments because the organization makes deliberate efforts to make its employees clearly understand that they are valued and treated with dignity.

6.0 Recommendations

The relationship between leaders' social support and employee commitment is established herein as significant and positive in the sense that actions or expressions of emotional, informational, and instrumental support can be considered as positively impacting and facilitating employee commitment features such as affective, continuance, and normative commitments. Thus, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Through social support, Bayelsa state civil service and their leaders should increase staff engagement to the ministries and civil servants' loyalty. This will also decrease stress levels and make civil servants more devoted without fear of retribution or discrimination.
- ii. Through social support, Bayelsa State Civil Service and their leaders should improve the psychological condition and engagement of employees as this will foster supportive relationships between coworkers and managers.
- iii. Bayelsa State Civil Service should provide social support to civil servants as this will make them feel confident making decisions and experience less anxiety at work. They will also likely work hard and participate actively to achieve personal and organizational goals.

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Appendix

Table 1: Relationship between social support and measures of employee commitment

Correlations

			SOC_SUPPORT	AFFECTIVE_COMM	CONTINUANCE_COMM	NORMATIVE_COMM
Spearman's rho	SOC_SUPPORT	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.027	.005	-.081
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.613	.924	.124
		N	359	359	359	359
	AFFECTIVE_COMM	Correlation Coefficient	.027	1.000	.121*	-.091
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	.	.021	.084
		N	359	359	359	359
	CONTINUANCE_COMM	Correlation Coefficient	.005	.121*	1.000	-.153**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.924	.021	.	.004
		N	359	359	359	359
	NORMATIVE_COMM	Correlation Coefficient	-.081	-.091	-.153**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.084	.004	.
		N	359	359	359	359

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Source: Research Data (SPSS Output), 2024