# Influence of Leaders' Perceived Power Source on Nigeria Surbodinate Employees' Commitment and Work Attitude

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*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*

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Results were discussed in line with previous literature and it was recommended that it is imperative for government to meet the demands of their personnel, especially in the areas of fringe benefits, which have a great impact on the amount of work they perform to strengthen their motivation, attitude, commitment and to consequently minimize employees' turnover.

*Keywords :* *Perceived Power Source, Work Attitude, Employees' Commitment, Nigeria.*

## I. Introduction

From a social information processing perspective, the power relationships between a leader and the subordinates constitute an important aspect of the subordinate's social environment (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). The social environment according to Griffin (1983), significantly influences a subordinate's perceptions and is critical to the understandings of his/her attitudes and behaviours. Thus, perception, although subjective in nature, emerges as an important mediating variable for leaders' power and subordinates' behaviour, and a key predictor of employees' well-being and commitment (Finegan, 2000).

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Power, although differently defined by different scholars (e.g. Cangemi, 1992; Krausz, 1986; Verderber and Verderber, 1992; Folger,Poole and Stutman, 1993; and Guinole,2007), relates with the ability or capacity of one person to move, persuade, entice or encourage others to attain specific goals or engage in specific activities.

French and Raven (1959) identified five sources of power and later, Raven (1965) expanded this to six by including information power. The sources of power identified by French and Raven (1959) are: reward power, coercive power, expert power, legitimate power and referent power. Reward power is the ability to recognise, give or promise reward to individuals for adhering to standards or expectations; coercive power is the ability to give or threaten punishment for non-compliance; information power, added by Raven (1965), is the control that is generated through the use of evidence deployed to make an argument (i.e. the target's belief that a leader has more information than an employee); expert power is the influence that comes from developing and communicating specialized knowledge or the perception of knowledge; legitimate power, otherwise known as power of position, is the formal authority that derives from a person's position in a group or an organization; and referent power means identification with, attraction to, or respect for the source of influence. It may operate through a range of processes (Collins and Raven, 1969), including consensual validations, social approval, and group identification. We also have power of relationships gained through formal and informal networks both inside and outside of organisations.

Every human being feels psychologically balanced with a situation that offers maximum pleasure and reduces the state of anxiety because humans, according to Freud (1922), are naturally hedonistic. So it is for workers (employees) with jobs that have good prospects of satisfying most of, if not all, their needs. Such will make them to be committed to their organizations.

Employees' commitment has been a core interest area in management and organisational studies for quite some times now with a plethora of studies

seeking to explicate its causal variables (Clugston, 2000).

Among the possible antecedents of commitment, leaders perceived power and its outcome on work attitude has received relatively low levels of empirical investigation, if received at all. For instance, in a comprehensive meta-analysis and review of antecedent correlates of commitment, work attitude and power were not mentioned (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

In recent organizational writings, it is presumed that attitude influences employees' sense of engagement, satisfaction, identification, and belonging (Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Peterson, 2000; Parker, 2000). Such sentiments might reasonably be expected to impact on employees' commitment.

The range of workplace variables in which gender differences have been examined is broad (Stewart, Bing, Gruys, and Helford, 2007) and include job satisfaction (Mason,1995), political tactics (Tannen, 1995) and leadership styes (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). Also, gender researches have focused on important outcome variables as employees' commitment ( Aven, Parker,and McEvoy, 1993), turnover, and intentions to leave ( Carston and Spector, 1987; Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1996). In the words of Cascio (1991), concentration of efforts in understanding workplace attitudes and behaviours is not surprising in the light of costs of employee turnover, absenteeism, and intentions to leave to organisations. Despite that there have been a substantial number of gender studies that have investigated the antecedents of organizational commitment however, literature on the relationship between gender and organizational commitment has had mixed results. Whereas some authors have suggested that women are less committed to their work than men ( e. g. Karrasch, 2003, Schwartz, 1989), others have not. The argument for why women are less committed is hinged on the fact that men and women are differently socialized and that women place greater emphasis on family roles than men ( e. g. Katz and Berry, 1991; Dodd-McCue and Wright, 1996) and as such, that they place less importance on their work roles. But can the argument be tenable at all times and across cultures?

Thus, this study is poised to investigate the possible effects of perception of leaders' power source on employees' work attitude and commitment, particularly in Nigeria where Nigerians, according to Eze (1983) have hungry, greedy, corrupt and manipulable personality. Specifically, the study hypothesized that.

1. Leaders' perceived power source will significantly influence employees' commitment and work altitude, and that

2. Sex of employees will significantly influence their commitment and work attitude.

It is hoped that findings from the study will assist managements of organizations to discover knowledge about individual differences as they affect organizational work environments, in addition to enhancing an ideal and harmonious work environment for workers because a desirable work environment is the catalyst to commitment, desirable work attitude, efficiency and organizational goal accomplishments.

## II. Methods

In investigating the influences of leaders' perceived power source on the work attitude and commitment of employees; the following procedures were adopted.

### a) Research Participants

A total of one hundred and eighty-three research participants comprising of 112 females and 71 males with an age range of 18 to 60 years were selected from Ado, Ikole and Ekiti West Local Government Councils in Ekiti State, Nigeria using the multi-level random sampling technique. In all, fifty-four participants (21 males and 33 females) were selected from Ekiti West Local Government Council; eighty-one participants (30 males and 51 females) were drawn from the Ministry of Works, Ado-Ekiti; while forty-eight participants (20 males and 28 females) were drawn from Ikole Local Government Council Secretariat, Ikole Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The use of multi- level random sampling technique made it possible to select one local government area each from the three senatorial districts in Ekiti State.

### b) Research Design

The study was an ex-post facto field study in which data were collected in a survey using the questionnaire method.

Thus, the study incorporates the independent groups' design and correlational design. The independent groups' design was adopted because the researcher is interested in comparing two sets of mean scores in each analysis. Correlational design was adopted because the researcher is interested in establishing whether any relationships exist among the variables of interest.

### c) Measure

Three standardized psychological measures were used in the study. They are:

1. The Power Source Scale (PSS) developed by Hinkin and Schreischeim (1989) to measure perceived power sources of leaders. It is a five point likert typed measure with response options ranging from Agree (5) through Undecided (3), to Strongly Disagree (1). The scale is comprised of 20 items in all and responses on the scale are all directly

scored. For the purpose of this study, a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained for the scale.

2. Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was also used in this study. It consist of twenty-four items measuring the commitment of a worker to his/ her organization. Allen and Meyer reported a reliability coefficient of 0.49 while Dunham, Grube and Castaneda (1994) reported a test retest reliability of 0.78 for the scale.

The scale is a 5 point likert typed scale with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) and responses are all directly scored.

3. Work Group Functioning Scale (WGFS) developed by Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, and Cammann (1982) is the third scale used in the study. The scale was designed to measure work attitude of participants. It is a fourteen item scale designed to measure:

a. The social psychological process in work environment;
b. The attitudes and perceptions of employees to work; and
c. Group dynamics in work organizations.

Seashore, et.al. (1982) provided the original psychometric properties for the American samples while Omoluabi (1997) reported the norm for the sub-scale of the Nigerian sample.

The scale is a 7 point likert type with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (7). All responses were directly scored except for item 8 which was scored reversely.

*d) Procedure*

Two hundred and thirty copies of a questionnaire containing the Power Source Scale, the Organizational Commitment Scale and the Work Group Functioning Scale together with biographic information eliciting items were given out to research participants to personally complete, having sought and obtained their consent to participate in the study. The completed copies of the questionnaire were later retrieved from the respondents for analysis. Twenty four (24) copies of the questionnaire were not returned and out of the remaining two hundred and six (206) copies of the questionnaire, only one hundred and eighty-three (183) copies were properly filled and found usable. Thus, a response rate of about 80 per cent was achieved. The properly filled copies of the questionnaire were subjected to analyses and the following results were obtained.

## III. Results

*Table 1a : Regression Summary Table Showing the Influence of Leaders' Perceived Power Source on Employees' Commitment.*

| Variables | β | t | p | R | R² | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expert power | 0.06 | -0.75 | >.05 | | | | |
| Reward power | 0.16 | 2.09 | <.05 | | | | |
| Coercive power | 0.17 | 2.39 | <.05 | | | | |
| Referent power | -0.52 | -0.66 | >.05 | 0.35 | 0.12 | 4.88 | <.05 |
| Legitimate power | 0.25 | 3.21 | <.05 | | | | |
| Dependent variable: Employees' commitment | | | | | | | |

*Table 1b: Regression Summary Table Showing the Influence of Leaders' Perceived Power Source on Employees' Work Attitude.*

| Variables | β | t | p | R | R² | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expert power | -0.06 | -0.70 | >.05 | | | | |
| Reward power | 0.22 | 2.84 | <.05 | | | | |
| Referent power | -0.09 | -1.17 | >.05 | | | | |
| Coercive power | 0.14 | 1.89 | >.05 | 0.27 | 0.07 | 2.73 | <.05 |
| Legitimate power | -0.13 | -1.67 | >.05 | | | | |
| Dependent variable: Work Attitude | | | | | | | |

*Table 1c :* Independent t-test Summary Table Showing the Effect of Sex of Employees on their Work Attitude and Commitment.

| Variables | Sex | N | X | SD | df | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employees' commitment | Male | 71 | 64.80 | 11.31 | 181 | -0.43 | >.05 |
| | Female | 112 | 65.54 | 11.25 | | | |
| Work Attitude | Male | 71 | 61.20 | 17.21 | 181 | 1.27 | <.05 |
| | Female | 112 | 57.89 | 17.16 | | | |

*Table 1d :* Pearson Correlation Summary Table Showing the Relationships Between Leaders Perceived Power Source, Employees' Commitment and Work Attitude.

| Variables | X | SD | df | N | r | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived power source | 42.05 | 8.31 | 181 | 183 | 0.02 | >.05 |
| Work Attitude Source | 59.17 | 17.21 | | | | |
| Perceived Power source | 42.05 | 8.31 | 181 | 183 | 0.28** | <.05 |
| Employees' commitment | 65.26 | 11.25 | | | | |
| Work Attitude | 59.17 | 17.21 | 181 | 183 | 0.36** | <.05 |
| Employees' Commitment | 65.26 | 11.25 | | | | |

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

From tables 1a and 1b above, it can be seen that leaders' perceived power source significantly predicted employees' commitment.[F (5, 178) = 4.88, P <.05] and work attitude [ F ( 5, 178) = 2.73, P<.05] respectively.

However, table la revealed that expert power (β =0.06) and referent power (β = - 0.66) do not individually predict employees' commitment.

From table lb, it was revealed that although there was a significant joint influence of leaders' perceived power source on employees' work attitude, nonetheless only reward power (β = 0.22) has significant individual influence on employees' work attitude

From table lc, it was revealed that sex of employees did not have any significant effect on employees' commitment [t (181) = -0.43; P>.05]. However, employees' sex has a significant effect on their work attitude [t (181) =1.27; P<.05].

Table ld revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between work attitude and employees' commitment [r (181) = 0.36; P <.05). Also, it was revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between leaders' perceived power source and employees' commitment [r (181) =0.28; P<.05). No significant relationship was found to exist however, between leaders perceived power source and work attitude.

## IV. Discussions

The results of the test of the influence of leaders' perceived power source on work attitude and employees commitment revealed that leaders perceived power source significantly influence employees

organizational commitment and work attitude among Nigeria workers.

This finding is in consonance with the findings of Simons and Mclean Parks' (2002) field research on behavioural integrity and leaders' perceived power source which discovered that perceived power source impacts trust in managers and engenders employees' commitment to their organizations. Simons and Mclean Park opined that commitment stimulates employees to perform discretionary service behaviours [a specific subset of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)], leading to increased profitability and lowered employee turnover. Ladebo (2004) also argued that there was maximum analysis showing that employees' work attitude were influenced by leaders' positive rewards. Participation in organizationally related activities and being conscientious in service delivery by employees is related to leaders' positive reward systems, according to Ladebo (2004).

It should be noted that independently, referent power and expert power were found not to have any significant influence on employees' commitment whereas reward power, coercive power, and legitimate power were found to influence commitment. Also, it was revealed that only reward power has a significant influence on work attitude. The reasons for these findings may not be unrelated with the position of Eze (1983) who argued that the typical Nigerian has a hungry, greedy, corrupt and manipulable personality characteristic, and are motivated by lower order needs which predispose them to corruption and manipulations. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2008) also noted that mundane reinforcements like money, buildings, motor cars and other luxuries often influence Nigerians in forming their

opinions, attitudes and consequent behaviours. Thus Nigerian employees may be positive in their work attitude and organizational commitment owing to the monetary benefits that they derive from their job and the opportunities their job offer them in social or work group membership and not for the additional knowledge and expertise that they may get in doing their jobs in an organization. That Nigerians are motivated by lower order needs of provision of basic physiological needs of food and shelter, safety needs, and love and belongingness needs rather than being motivated by higher order needs like esteem, self-actualization, cognitive differentiation, patriotism and altruism is not unconnected with poverty, or its fear, in Nigeria. The cost of living is high and job opportunities are at a minimum level in Nigeria. Where a job is secured in Nigeria, remuneration in wages and salaries are usually very low. It is not surprising that Nigeria workers have a slogan of saying 'our take home salaries cannot take us home'.

In line with the discussions above, Sagie (1998) noted that employees exhibit strong identifications with, or attachment to an organization that adequately rewards them and hence engage in behaviours that will promote organisational performance through their commitments.

Coyle, Shapiro and Kessler (2003) also asserted that individuals who feel themselves to be part of a supportive work environment, where demonstration of care and consideration are the norm, reciprocate this behaviour to their fellow employees because they are mostly adequately remunerated.

Despite that a plethora of findings support that work attitude and employees commitment are influenced by reward system however, Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1994) did not find any influence of reward on work attitude and employees commitment. Variations in findings here may be due to time lag and changing value system. Or they may be socio-culturally influenced.

Results of this study showed that sex did not influence employees' commitment but significantly influences work attitude. That sex did not influence employees' commitment, in Nigeria, may not be unconnected with the fact that there is gross unemployment and limited employment options in the country. Therefore, irrespective of sex, any gainfully employed worker in Nigeria will display greater organizational commitment having realized the high costs associated with establishing organizational membership. Work attitude is mostly built on employee/employer reciprocal exchange relationship.

Thus, there is usually an exchange of good treatment for positive attitude. However, most employers are exploiters seeking to maximize profit at the expense of the welfare and well-being of their employees. Thus, when an employer/employee relationship is perceived as unrewarding, unequitable or parasitic in nature, there may tend to be an attendant negative work attitude from the employee. Employees work attitude covers a range of attitudinal and behavioural responses about an organization which can be influenced by, and through, his/her behaviour, leadership influence and skills.

The results of this study also showed that a significant positive relationship existed between leaders' perceived power source and employees commitment; and between work attitudes and employees' commitment; but no significant relationship was found to exist between leaders perceived power source and work attitude. That no significant relationship existed between leaders' perceived power source and employees' work attitude may not be unconnected with high unemployment rate in Nigeria occasioned by dearth of viable organisations and a crippled economy. Therefore people engage in just any work that is available to earn a living irrespective of their training, skills, knowledge or expertise.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendation

The pattern of relationships between leaders' perceived power source, employees' commitment, and work attitude is appealing. First, the study demonstrate that the concepts of employees' commitment and work attitude translate to the Nigerian context since it has shown that leaders' perceived power source significantly influences employees' commitment and work attitude.

Second, the significance of the component of leaders' perceived power source is confirmed, showing which of the power source is capable of influencing employee commitment and work attitude independently.

The fact that sex of employees has no effect on employees' commitment was also confirmed.

This study has necessitated a critical look at patterns of leaders and employer/employee relationship which must be healthy, empathetic and symbiotic. Also, employers must always adequately reward their employees in the area of fringe benefits to enhance organizational growth and development through effectiveness and efficiency arising from employees' commitment to organizations and a positive work attitude.

A change in value system for the appreciation of honesty, hard work, and integrity, and a subsequent motivation by higher order needs by Nigerians is also necessary. This is achievable through mass enlightenment and environmental changes through the adoption of psycho-infrastructural strategies for societal and behavioural changes.

According to Uguru-Okorie (2002) in his psycho-infrastructural model of behaviour change, environmental manipulations can be employed to produce behavioural and ideological changes that will

lead to a desired state of affairs. Such environmental manipulations are imperative for value changes.

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