Self-Development and Employee Commitment in Telecommunication Firms in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined the association between self-development and employee commitment in telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Personal initiative to learn, improved personal capability, personal changed mentality and increased participation served as dimensions of self-development which is the predictor variable while affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment were used as measures of the criterion variable. A cross sectional survey was adopted, and a total of 226 employees drawn as sample out of a population of 550 employees from four firms comprising of MTN, Globacom, Airtel and 9Mobile using the Krecjie and Morgan's table. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient with SPSS version 21. It was found that self-development leads to employee commitment. Therefore we conclude that self-development brings about employee commitment. Based on the above conclusion, it was recommended that telecommunication firms should encourage the self-development of their employee to ensure employee commitment.*

Keywords*: Self-development, Affective commitment, Normative commitment, Continuance commitment.*

I.   Introduction

Employee commitment plays a fundamental role in realising organisational success. This makes it the concern of manager, management and proprietors of organisations. Employee commitment is multi-dimensional in nature, encompassing workers loyalty, their enthusiasm to exert effort, adherence to organisational values and desire to stay (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Its absence in any organisation results in high employee turnover, low profitability, absenteeism, low productivity levels, and others. A committed employee is expected to work diligently, conscientiously, provide value, promote the organisation's services or product and ensure continuous improvement (Madigan, *et al.*, 1999; Beheshtifar & Herat, 2013). But in certain cases, employee commitment is difficult to attain, hence this study.

Although, researchers have studied employee commitment but not much has been done in relating self-development with employee commitment. In that light, we are thus inclined to argue that adoption of self-development leads to employee commitment especially amongst managers. Armstrong (2005) avers that management development is about improving managers' performance in present roles and preparing them for greater responsibilities in future. However, the relationship existing between self-development and employee commitment are yet to be explored as is the case with other previous studies as shown on employee commitment and organisational performance (Irefin & Mechanic, 2014), employee commitment and employee job performance (Khan, *et al.*, 2010), job performance attitude towards work and organisational commitment (Ahmad, *et al.,* 2010), spiritual leadership and workers' commitment (Asawo, 2009), employee commitment and its well-being (Meyer & Maltin, 2010), employee commitment and motivation (Meyer *et al.*, 2004), and others. This study conducts an investigation exploring the relationship between self-development and employee commitment in telecommunication industry in Nigeria.

The employees of the telecommunication firms were expected to be committed to their job, owing to the crucial nature of its products /services to nation's economic growth. Unfortunately, however, absence of commitment from employees in telecommunication industry has resulted to too many challenges such as network / interconnectivity problems, call drops, call fading, poor customer care services, poor internet/data service, difficulty in sending SMS messages and credit recharge difficulties amongst others (George, 2015). Perhaps,

these telecommunication firms, have not given due attention to self-development; and this has aggravated the complaint amongst consumers. Based on the above uncertainties this research is being conducted to examine the association between management development and employee commitment in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria and then Rivers State in particular.

The study variables are: self- development as predictor variable, employee commitment as criterion variable. Self development was derived from the work of Mumford (1993). Employee commitment here is used as dependent variable. The measures to employee commitment are affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitments (Meyer & Allen, 1991).The conceptual framework shows relationship between the independent variable and that of dependent variable as shown in the figure 1.
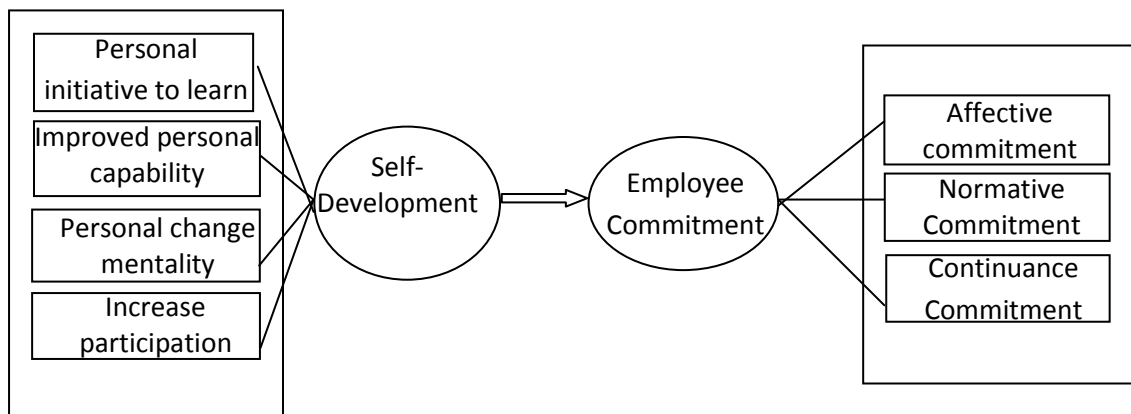

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Self-development and Employee Commitment.
Source: Researchers' desk. 2021.

The study sought to find out if self-development can bring about employee commitment in the telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Specifically, this work will help us achieve the following objectives:

1)   To determine if self-development leads to employee affective commitment in telecommunication firms Nigeria.

2)   To determine if self-development leads to employee normative commitment in telecommunication firms Nigeria.

3)   To determine if self-development leads to employee continuance commitment in telecommunication firms Nigeria.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1)   To what extent does self-development leads to employee affective commitment in the telecommunication firms?

2)   To what extent does self-development leads to employee normative commitment in telecommunication firms?

3)   To what extent does self-development leads to employee continuance commitment in telecommunication firms?

II.   Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

The baseline social theory that is pertinent to our study is Social Exchange Theory (SET). Importantly, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is influential conceptual paradigms that enable a researcher understand workplace behaviour, (Copranzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory is based on social interaction which is seen as an exchange activity, tangible and intangible (Homans, 1961); especially as it concerns   rewards and costs. Also Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) posit that exchange theory examines the way through which reciprocity is established and sustained in social relations, as well as mutual gratifications among individuals. The basic

assumption of exchange theory is that individuals establish and continue social relations based on their expectations that such relations will be mutually advantageous. Judging from the view of Copranzano & Mitchell (2005), we are inclined to state that, management employees who expect to be encouraged in terms of self-development from the establishment they work for will be committed to assigned responsibilities; that they will reciprocate the development gesture shown to them.

Self-Development and its Dimensions

According to Mumford (1993) as enunciated by Armstrong (2006) self-development is recognising that individuals can learn but are unlikely to be taught and that the initiative for development is the responsibility of the individual. It is personal effort at developing oneself to make one effectively perform assigned task. Accordingly, Pienaar *et al.* (2003) opined that self-development will result to a change mentality by first encouraging individuals to seek and foster change within them. Also, Temporal (1984) as posited in Nwikiabeh (2017) submitted that self-development enables the organisation keep up with dynamics of change as it even encourages managers to think positively about change and as well as improvement. Moreover, self-development encourages participation and may boost individuals' commitment level to their organisation (Pienaar *et al.*, 2003). It is one's investments in him or her to boost one's capabilities for improve performance.

Furthermore, Rothmann (1999) advocated that manager's effectiveness flows from his intra-personal and interpersonal effectiveness which are vital to self-development. Self-development programmes are essential to stimulate the self-awareness, self-regard, self-acceptance, flexibility and interpersonal effectiveness identified as problems confronting an organisation. It is noteworthy to mention that self-development is achieved through programmes directed at the stimulation of personal growth. These include self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-efficacy and resilience and coping (Stumpfer, 2000). Also, Pienaar *et al.* (2003) suggested that the distinctiveness of self-development as a process of growth lies in the synthesis of three important dimensions which include that of development, the notion as it relates the whole person and personal responsibility. The dimensions of self-development used in this study are discussed subsequently.

Personal Initiative to Learn: According to Fay & Frese (2001), personal initiative is seen as behaviour that results where an individual takes an active and self-starting approach to work at goals and tasks persisting in overcoming barriers and setbacks. Initiative to learn prevails in an atmosphere where individual manager is responsible to improve his performance of a given task using the self starting approach (Elingson & Noe, 2017). Personal initiative is associated with seeking opportunity to learn and engaging in learning activities.

Improve Personal Capacity: This indicates an individual's effort at adding to his competency and to perform better on an assigned responsibility. The manager in a bid to improve his personal capacity got engaged in activities that raise the ability to better perform.

Personal Change Mentality: It has to do with an individual changing the way he thinks, from negative to position toward developing himself. This involves positive attitude towards self development for better performance thus putting on the 'I can do' mentality. This is important since personal change is at the root of organisational change.

Increase Participation: This is viewed in terms of an individual who make himself more available to take part in the activities of an organisation as a way of boosting his capability for better performance.

Employee Commitment and its Measures

The task of defining commitment is a tricky one (Meyer & Allen 1997; Meyer & Hercovitch, 2001). Commitment is viewed as a force which binds a person to a certain course of action that is significant to a given target (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Meyer & Maltin (2010) said that the binding force can be experienced in its dissimilar ways (ie can be accompanied by different mindsets), including an affective attachment and involvement to its target and the consciousness of the cost associated with discontinuing involvement with the target. In it pure form, these mindsets are regarded as affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC) respectively.

Akintayo (2010) avers that employee commitment is conceived as the extent to which the employee feels devoted to one's organisation. As viewed by Ongori (2007), employee commitment is described to be effective response of individual to the entire organisation including level of attachment or loyalty employee feels for the organisation. Similarly, Zheng (2010) saw employee commitment to be simply employee attitude to

organisation. It shows identification with, involvement in everyday activities performed in the organisation. Management is to a large extent concerned with determining commitment level displayed by organisational members at all the times. Shahid & Azhar (2013) argued that employee commitment is an essential factor which determines the success level of the organisation. Also, employee commitment to an organisation has acquired increasing demand as it aids them to retain more staff thereby increase in achievement, productivity and effectiveness.

For this research, we have anchored our study of commitment on the work of Meyer & Allen (1991) who proposed a three component model of organisational commitment that integrates a lot of different conceptualisations. These three dimensions or constructs are affective, continuance and normative commitments (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These forms of commitments identified by Meyer & Allen (1991) constitute the measures of employee commitment in this work.

Affective Commitment (AC): Meyer & Allen (1991) define affective commitment to be employee' s emotional attachment to identifying with, and involving in, an organisation owing to feelings that are positive, or emotions, to organisation. The antecedent for affective commitment consists of perceived job characteristic where there is task independence, task importance, task uniqueness, skill diversity and supervisory feedback as well as organisational dependability and how employees feel the organisation can be looked up to as it relates to looking after their interest, and supposed participatory management that can influence decisions on work environment and other uses of concern to them (Madi *et al.*, 2012). They further asserted that the adoption of these antecedents is in consonance with the findings by Rowden (2002) that these factors create worthwhile situations, intrinsically favourable to improvement of affective commitment. Also, Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) maintained that the primary bases for the development of affective commitment are personal involvement, identification with the relevant target, and value congruence (Meyer, *et al.*, 2004). As viewed by Bal *et al.* (2014) affective commitment reflects an emotional attachment and involvement in the organisation. This is in tandem with Meyer & Allen (1991) who had earlier defined affective component as an emotional attachment to the organisation via identification, taking part and enjoying membership. It has also been said that affective commitment shows commitment that depends on emotional ties the employee builds with the 0rganisation through work experiences that are positive.

Normative Commitment (NC): According to Madi *et al.* (2012) normative commitment is regarded as an employee' s feeling of obligation towards staying with an organisation for the reason that an employee has internalised core values and goals of that organisation. Normative commitment reflects sense of obligation on the part of the employee to continue his membership in a given organisation (Meyer& Smith, 2000; Bal *et al.* 2014). It has also been conceived that the likely antecedents for normative commitment are co-worker commitment which involve affective and normative dimensions and commitment behaviours, organisational dependability and that of participatory management. Also, co-workers' commitment will offer normative signals that is to persuade the development of employee normative commitment (Commerias & Fournier, 2002; Madi *et al.*, 2012). It is worthy to mention that organisational dependability and participating management are key issues that will foster and instil moral obligation that the employee will give in return to the organisation. Normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation instilled in an employee as to sustain organisational membership (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Bal *et al.*, 2014).

Continuance Commitment (CC): Bal *et al.* (2014) opined that continuance commitment is premised on the perceived costs associated with discontinuing work with the organisation. Kanter (1968) as cited in Nwikiabeh (2017) referred to continuance commitment as a cognitive orientation where costs become the basic consideration of leaving or staying with a given organisation. Continuance commitment is seen as the commitment that is dependent on the cost an employee associates with separating from the organisation. The continuance commitment antecedents are age, tenure, career fulfilment and intention to leave. It is imperative to assert that while employee with a strong affective commitment continue employment with an organisation for the reason that they want to, employee with strong continuance commitment stay because need to and employee with strong normative commitment because they feel they should do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991, Bal *et al.*, 2014). Similarly continuance commitment is said to relate to such terms of employment as job contract, which may make leaving the present job very costly and troublesome (Mullins, 2001). Continuance commitment also is further develops as a result of accumulated investments, or side-bets that would be lost if an employee discontinued work, and owing to lack of alternative to the current job (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Premised to the foregone, there is an evaluation of the associated cost or profit as it concerns the employee investment as a condition for commitment to that given organisation. Westhuizen (2006) also asserted that continuance is a

mental state that is not only there because of physical gains but due to subjective penalties related to the desire to end employment in that organisation.

Self-Development and Employee Commitment

It was earlier asserted by Mumford (1993) as enunciated by Armstrong (2006) that self-development is a recognition that individuals can learn but are not likely to be taught and that the initiative for development often rests with the individual. Also, Akintayo (2010) said employee commitment has to do with the degree to which the individual employee feels devoted to an organisation. Bradley (2011) opined that continuous self development is where individuals commit themselves to improving their knowledge and understanding through their careers. Once a career is started, it is expected that the individual continuously pursue the career to a level of self-actualisation. In the same vein, Giulioni (2013) supported the fact that employee self-development facilitates three essential activities namely internalizing intentions, observing progress and extracting lessons. This in no small measure put the individual employee in a better place for self-development in organisation. The effort for self-development is geared towards developing the individual employee to be capable of handling the daily and future job challenges and its requirement to accomplish goals in organisation to guarantee employee commitment. Interestingly, Giulioni (2013) assertion shows that close monitoring of self-development activities will produce more results both to individuals and organisations.

As earlier stated, Rothman (1999) advocated that manager's effectiveness flow from his intra-personal and interpersonal effectiveness (Amos & Mather, 1998), which are essential to self-development. And that self development programmes are necessary to stimulate the self-awareness, self-regard, self-acceptance flexibility and interpersonal effectiveness identified problems in an organisation. It is also submitted that self-development enables the organisation to be abreast with dynamics of change as this encourages managers to think positively about change and as well improvement. This no doubt place the organisation at it Eldorado for optimum productivity and success. Moreover, self-development encourages participation and may increase individuals' commitment to the job (Pienaar *et al.,* 2003). Based on that we are inclined to hypothesize thus:

Ha$_1$:   There is a significant relationship between self-development and employee affective commitment in Telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Ha$_2$:   There is a significant relationship between self-development and employee normative commitment in Telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Ha$_3$:   There is significant relationship between self-development and employee continuance commitment in Telecommunication firms in   Nigeria.

III.   Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey design. As stated by Ahiauzu (2010) survey research is a quantitative social research in which one systematically asks many persons the same set of questions. In survey design there is interaction with respondents with appropriate data collection instrument such as questionnaires and interviews. The cross sectional survey design using a questionnaire has been used in this study. The respondents are obtained from telecommunication firms registered with the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) as are operating in Rivers State. They are MTN Nigeria, Globacom Limited, Airtel Nigeria and 9Mobile. The categories of employees considered for the study are top managers, Head of Departments (HODs), and supervisors. The population is five hundred and fifty (550) employees that spread round the four (4) firms being investigated.

In the determination of the sample size, the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table was adopted. A sample size of two hundred and twenty-six (226) employees was drawn from the population; distributed among the firms thus: MTN=89, GLO=49, AIRTEL=47, and 9Mobile=31; using the Bowley's (1964) formulae as shown in George (2015) which assisted us to proportionately determine the sample sizes of the different telecommunication firms based on their populations. Also, the stratified random sampling technique was used to distinguish between top managers, Head of Department (HOD) and supervisors to get to the respondents. The questionnaire method of data collection was adopted.

The reliability test based on Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for self-development was 0.721, affective commitment 0.794, normative commitment 0.810 and continuance commitment 0.894. The Cronbach Alpha values are above the specified benchmark of 0.70 (Nunally, 1978; Hair *et al.,* 2010). The data obtained from the field were analysed using the inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the

hypotheses as result of the interval nature of the measurement scale used. The analysis was done using a computer programme-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

IV. Data Analysis and Results

Bivariate Analysis

Self-development and Employee Commitment

This section presents the results of test of hypotheses conducted using the Pearson' s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at a confidence interval of 95% meaning a significant level ($<$) of 0.05.

Table 1: The effect of self-development on employee commitment

		Self	Affective	Norm	Continuance
Self	Pearson Correlation	1	.342**	.230**	.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.000
	N	197	197	197	197
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.342**	1	.591**	.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	197	197	197	197
Norm	Pearson Correlation	.230**	.591**	1	.653**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000
	N	197	197	197	197
Continuance	Pearson Correlation	.607**	.517**	.653**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	197	197	197	197

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

Source: Field survey, 2021

The relationship between self-development and affective commitment has a correlation value of .342 with a p-value of 0.000 indicating a significant correlation, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The relationship between self-development and the normative commitment has a correlation value of .230 and at a p-value of 0.000 indicating a significant correlation; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The relationship between self-development and continuance commitment also has a correlation value of .607 and a p-value of 0.000 indicating a significant correlation; therefore the null hypothesis was also rejected. A strong correlation was also shown in the analysis. The above analysis shows that:

i. Self development significantly relates to employee affective commitment in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria.
ii. Self development significantly relates to employee normative commitment in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria.
iii. Self development significantly relates to employee continuance commitment in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria.

V. Discussions of Findings

The analysis earlier did reveal certain findings on which form the basis for our discussions in line with existing knowledge. The findings show that self-development relates to employee commitment in the telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Firstly, we discovered that telecommunication firms in Nigeria encouraged self-development of managers as means of ensuring employee affective commitment. In Mumford' s (1995) view, management development is an attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through a planned and deliberate learning

process. It is conceived as how individuals improve their capabilities and learn to effectively perform in managerial roles (Baldwin & Padgetts, 1993; Mumford, 1997). This individual effort is aimed developing oneself. This supports our findings which relates to self-development since individual must improve their capabilities to achieve affective commitment in their firm. For affective commitment, is seen in terms of emotional attachment to their organisation by individual employees. As was earlier posited, affective commitment has to do with employee's emotional attachment to identifying with and involving in the organisation as it bothers on positive feelings, and emotions, towards an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1993). This emotional attachment has to do with the identification and involvement and is enhanced by self-development of managers in an organisation especially in the telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Secondly, it was discovered that self-development of managers ensures normative and continuance commitments. While normative commitment has to do with the obligation of an individual employee towards being a member of an organisation (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Bal, *et al.*, 2014), continuance commitment preaches perceived cost linked with leaving or remaining with that organisation (Kanter, 1968). The responses gathered from respondents support that self-development relates to employee commitment.

VI.   Conclusions and Recommendations
Given the findings as discussed above, it is our conclusion that:

a.   Self-development of managers leads to employee affective commitment in telecommunication firm in Nigeria.
b.   Self-development of managers leads to employee normative commitment telecommunication firms in Nigeria.
c.   Self-development of managers leads to employee continuance commitment in telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Consequently, we thus recommend as follows:
1.   Telecommunication firms in Nigeria should encourage self-development of the employee   to ensure employee affective commitment.
2.   Telecommunication firms should encourage self-development since it enhances employee normative commitment in Nigeria.
3.   Telecommunication firms in Nigeria should encourage self-development because it is   seen   to ensure employee continuance commitment.

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