

## The Impact of Empathy Leadership in Nigeria Banking System

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**Abstract:** *This paper investigated the impact of empathy leadership in Nigeria banking system. The paper revealed that empathetic leadership can increase or decrease the effect of work system on work life balance. It was recommended among others that; the service system of workers by the management of the Commercial banks in Nigeria, should be such that centres and emphasizes on consistency, and equity, matching wages and salaries with workers actual contributions and efforts channelled toward the achievement of organizational goals and objectives.*

**Keywords:** *Empathetic Involvement Balance Time Balance, Satisfaction Balance*

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### INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the ability to get an insight or recognize the emotions of others. Empathy does not mean that we live emotions of other people, but it means that we understand other people's emotions from our experiences. It is built on openness to feelings of others, on the ability to read information from nonverbal channels. Empathy is based on the ability to intuit people's feelings, attributing the utmost attention to nonverbal information: voice tone, mimics, gestures and movements of the person, etc. Empathetic leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the relationship between work system and work-life balance in Commercial banks. Work system is characterized by their emphasis on employee development, engagement, and empowerment to achieve superior organizational performance. In this context, empathetic leadership, characterized by understanding, support, and consideration for employees' well-being, is a critical factor in managing the potential trade-offs and promoting a harmonious balance between work system and work-life equilibrium (Rego, Owens, Leal, Melo, Cunha & Gonçalves, 2017).

Empathetic leadership involves a leader's ability to understand and resonate with the experiences, emotions, and needs of their employees. It goes beyond traditional

management by focusing on building strong relationships, providing support, and considering individual circumstances. In the context of Commercial banks, empathetic leadership is crucial for promoting a positive work environment and addressing the challenges posed by work system (Rego et al., 2017). Empathetic leadership can influence the relationship between work system and work-life balance in several ways; empathetic leaders prioritize the well-being of their employees; they recognize that employees have personal lives and responsibilities outside of work and encourage employees to express their concerns, needs, and challenges. Empathetic leaders are more likely to embrace flexible work arrangements that align with employees' needs. This can include options like flex time, remote work, and part-time schedules, which can be instrumental in achieving work-life balance.

As a leader, by means of empathy we have the possibility to better understand our subordinates, to intuit their thoughts and feelings, to anticipate their behaviour and even to act on it accordingly. Empathy appears as a specific human need being based on a validated social experience that allows rejections as a reflex of the possible penetration of the psychology of the other. Grant (2013) pays

particular attention to both empathy and ability to manage, lead and handle interpersonal relations, subsumed under the concept of "interpersonal power". Empathy is seen as a capacity of transposition that is imaginative-conceptual, but also emotional, with functions of knowledge, foresight, communication, and performance inclined contagion. Interpersonal power could be defined as a higher self-control state, the ability to overcome anxiety and stress (Mashud et al, 2010; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Empathetic leadership, characterized by understanding, compassion, and emotional support, has gained recognition as a crucial factor in fostering a positive work environment and contributing to employees' work-life

### **Empathetic Leadership**

Empathetic leadership involves the ability of leaders to understand and share the feelings of their employees. It goes beyond traditional leadership styles by emphasizing emotional intelligence, active listening, and genuine concern for the well-being of team members. The leaders are attuned to the personal and professional challenges faced by their team members. This understanding forms the foundation for initiatives and policies that support work-life balance, recognizing the need for harmony between work and personal life (Eisenbeiss et al., 2018). Empathetic leaders provide emotional support, creating a work environment where employees feel understood and valued. This emotional support is linked to higher levels of employee well-being, reducing stress and enhancing overall life satisfaction (Barling, Loughlin, & Kelloway, 2022).

Active listening is a key component of empathetic leadership that allows leaders to understand the unique challenges and concerns of their employees. Addressing these concerns contributes to a work environment where employees feel supported in managing their work and personal responsibilities (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Empathetic leaders On this note, Gale (2004) believes that the focal point on the empathic concept is the conduct of mentally reproducing the states, thoughts, actions of other and placing oneself

balance. empathetic leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the work-life balance of employees. By fostering a culture of understanding, providing emotional support, and adapting leadership styles to individual needs, empathetic leaders create environments where employees can thrive both personally and professionally. A leader that exercises this kind of leadership fosters a supportive and understanding work environment, contributing to the overall success of both individuals and the organization. They strive to improved employee well-being, reduced stress, increased job satisfaction, enhanced work-life balance, and greater employee engagement and retention.

are often more flexible and adaptable in their leadership styles. This adaptability extends to accommodating diverse work arrangements, such as flexible schedules or remote work, to support employees in achieving a better work-life balance. They tailor leadership approaches and policies to accommodate these individual needs, contributing to a more personalized approach to work-life balance (Hoffman et al., 2019).

Transparent communication about work-life balance policies is a hallmark of empathetic leadership. Leaders who effectively communicate these policies create an environment where employees feel informed and supported in managing their professional and personal responsibilities (Kossek et al., 2014). Empathetic leadership significantly influences employee engagement and retention. Employees who feel understood and supported are more likely to be engaged in their work and committed to the organization, contributing to long-term employee retention. Improved employee well-being, reduced stress, increased job satisfaction, enhanced work-life balance, and greater employee engagement and retention.

in their position. Empathy is achieved by imaginative-conceptual transposition in the reference system of another – assumption of

the way of thinking and achieving the social role – and emotional transposition, the

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action of activating an experience, substituting in the mentioned experiences by identifying the partner's emotional status, in other words taking over his state of mind (Gale, 2004). People "emotionally empowered" have the ability to unconsciously imitate the emotions seen in others, having the same mimicry, gestures, tone of voice and other nonverbal aspects. It is recognition in his/her own way of the other person's feelings (Amabile et al, 2005).

When two people interact, the affection is transferred from the person that expresses the feelings stronger to the one that is more passive. Strong emotional relationships lead to "sentimental synchronicity". Emotional contagion, the power to synchronize emotionally, is encountered at individual leaders, allowing them to organize the group, negotiate solutions, to set multiple personal connections, to determine the cause of negative feelings and personal worries (Amabile et al, 2005). Peter (2016) argues that in the process of acquiring authority, empathy and interpersonal skills play a special role, but also the participation in exchanging emotional messages, often at imperceptible

### **Importance Empathetic Leadership**

Empathetic leadership, characterized by understanding, support, and emotional intelligence, plays a pivotal role in shaping the work-life balance of employees in the banking industry. Prioritizing employee well-being, implementing work-life balance policies, and fostering a supportive culture, contribute greatly to enhance productivity and the overall success of banking organizations (Barling et al., 2022). Empathetic leadership could lead to improved employee well-being, increased engagement, higher productivity, and greater organizational success. Empathetic leadership creates a work culture that prioritizes both personal and professional fulfilment, fostering an environment conducive to productivity and success in the banking sector. The recognition of employees consented efforts in service delivery is a powerful motivator to employees that can make them to be more productive,

levels (subliminal) – with a power of contagion and increased influence leading to "synchronicity of feelings.

This emotional contagion allows groups to organize, the negotiation of solutions, setting of multiple personal connections, determining the causes of negative feelings and personal anxiety, self-motivation and motivating others etc (Peter, 2016). To expect the personal influence to be bracing, beneficial and constructive, a leader must be self-controlled. Leaders with should be able to detect signs of increased anxiety to determine the stimuli to calm the anxiety arising in the team and to direct others towards an optimistic and enthusiastic state that facilitates solving difficult problems (Peter, 2016). In any human group the leader has the full capacity to influence the emotions of others. These emotions lead to performance if they are channelled by the enthusiasm and a low yield if people feel hatred, resentment or anxiety. Subordinates expect from a leader an encouraging emotional connection, they the empathy they expect for better work force (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

contributing positively to the overall success of the banking industry.

Obviously, empathetic leadership contributes to higher levels of employee retention in the banking industry (Kerzner, 2017). Retained employees are more experienced, knowledgeable, and invested in the success of the organization, which ultimately and positively impact on productivity. Empathetic leaders effectively communicate expectations regarding work-life balance and make clear communication about priorities, deadlines, and the importance of maintaining a balance between work and personal life which helps reduce ambiguity and stress, contributing to enhanced productivity (Barling et al., 2022). It demonstrates adaptive leadership styles, tailoring their approach to the unique needs of their teams. This adaptability contributes to improved team dynamics, collaboration, and ultimately, higher productivity within banking

teams and provide emotional support, creating a workplace culture where employees feel valued and engaged.

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### **Empathetic Leadership in the Banking Sector**

Engaged employees in the banking sector are more likely to be productive, committed to their work, and actively contribute to the organization's success (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Empathetic leaders in the banking industry prioritize the well-being of their employees and involves leaders who understand and respond to the diverse needs and challenges faced by their employees. It encompasses emotional support, active listening, and a commitment to creating a work environment that fosters a healthy work-life balance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By recognizing and understanding the personal and professional challenges faced by banking professionals, these leaders contribute to reduced stress levels, increased job satisfaction, and overall employee well-being.

### **Features Empathetic Leadership**

Understanding the intentions, feelings and thoughts of others, of course with the approximation permitted by such knowledge, we can have relatively accurate expectations of the partner's behaviour, which is extremely important in establishing desirable interpersonal relations and therefore allowing us to create a behavioural strategy towards them. Important is that the leader can correctly evaluate what his subordinate feels, lives, thinks, he can implement his psychological situation and, through effective communication, can create appropriate conditions for influence. Like any ability, empathic ability is an innate psycho-physiological potential but is performed and developed through interpersonal process knowledge, and, if the subject wants it, through self-training (Kock, 2008; Peter, 2016). Mayfield and Mayfield (2017) observed that the primary responsibility of leaders is to induce positive feelings to the people they lead. This happens when that leader creates resonance – a reservoir of positive elements which releases all the best in subordinates.

The idea expressed determines to conclude that the basic role of leadership is strictly related to showing emotions. From this point

of view this basic dimension of business management, although often invisible or ignored completely, determines how well all the other things started by the leader will perform. This is why emotional intelligence is so important in the equation of obtaining success in leadership. The management based on emotional intelligence and then the ability to show empathy is constructed from connections with neurology (Hulsheger et al, 2009). Revolutionary discoveries in the field of brain research shows that mood and actions of leaders have a decisive impact on those he directs, and casts a new light on the power that has a leadership based on emotional intelligence and then leader's empathic ability, namely the power to inspire and stimulate passion and enthusiasm, motivation and dedication, to support people, to give confidence and to show understanding for people who leaders work with (Hulsheger et al, 2009; Peter, 2016).

When leaders channel emotions in a negative direction, this produces dissonance, thereby undermining the emotional foundations that allow people to give their best with maximum efficiency. The efficiency of the leader in covering this basic emotional dimension chiefly determines the prosperity for an organization. The empathic ability has a particular importance in leadership (Peter, 2016; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Capacity to be empathic is a prerequisite to optimize the leader's relations with subordinates and for effective communication. Leader's empathy is a spontaneous and rapid way of entering the mood of the subordinate (Grant, 2013; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

According to Adhariani et al (2017), empathy provides the step to the basic responsibility of the leader – to generate resonance. If he is aware of the feelings of others and demonstrates understanding of their feelings and emotions, the leader may say and act in

the best way, whether to settle fears, to calm the anger, to join the fun or to cultivate an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. Under these conditions harmonization allows the

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respond without noticing a wrong tone of his voice, his words and deeds thus creating negative reactions within the group. Empathy, which also means to listen to others and to understand their views and behaviour, allows leaders to connect the emotional channels between subordinates (Adhariani et al, 2017). One of the main characteristics of empathic ability in leadership is that it enhances and prolongs the emotional impact of the leader (Grant, 2013).

To this effect, Gale (2004) stresses that, the leader's empathic ability level is what determines the efficiency with which they

### **Integration Theories**

The fourth theory that gives direction to this study is the Integration Theory postulated by Anne Treisman and Garry Gelade (1980). The theory refers to the holistic view that work-life and community-life domains can be encouraged and facilitated better through a healthy system of flexible and permeable boundaries. The theory assumes that, with regard to work and life, the incorporation of additional contextual elements such as community into a body of knowledge is best portrayed by the Integration theory. This theory makes all 3 stakeholders (employers, workers and communities) active partners with equal voices in the formation of a holistic model of work-life balance by focusing on

### **CONCLUSION**

The expression of empathy by the leadership of the organization contributes toward improving the relationship between work system and work-life balance; enabling a more stable and focused workforce in Commercial banks in South-south Nigeria. It is recommended that the leadership of the Commercial banks in South-south Nigeria,

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leader to understand the values and common priorities by which to guide the group (Weick, 2005). A leader without the ability to empathize will

identify, manage and channel the feelings of those whom they relate, thereby helping the group reach its present objectives. Under an empathetic leader, people enjoy a common level of understanding, share ideas, learn from others, make decisions together and complete the actions. This creates an emotional bond between group members, allowing them to maintain their focus even in the midst of change and profound uncertainty. Without emotional involvement, the alleged leader can only manage the situation – but it does not belong to him – and that is not full leadership (Kock, 2008).

contemporary understanding that rebuild traditional work-life paradigms (Morris & Maden, 2017). Instead of providing solutions which are shaped in isolation, an approach that includes all parties and shared responsibility will provide better results in both work and family domain. The relevance or implication of this theory is that, an employee's life comprises of several facets and that they are interrelated with each other to the extent that if one suffers, the other will surely be affected. This theory also explained that in order for the aspects of an employee's life not to suffer, boundaries must be managed properly, most especially between the work life and the personal life.

express commitment toward building mutually respectful and trusting relationship with their employees or subordinates, by being more empathetic and understanding toward the workers; thus, effecting the necessary conditions for improved working conditions for increased levels of stability and work-life balance.

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