



TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AMONG TEACHERS IN SELECTED PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UKWUANI AND ETHIOPE EAST LGA, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the relationship between transactional leadership approach (TLA) and employee commitment (EC) using secondary school teachers as a case study. The study considered contingency punishment and contingency reward disintegrated into recognition/appreciation as well as promotion and salary increase as dimensions of TLA. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and used a 20-item closed-ended, validated and structured questionnaire as an instrument for data collection from a sample of 189 employees of private secondary schools in Ukwuani and Ethiope East Local Government Areas of Delta State. Out of the 189 questionnaires administered, only 171 were retrieved, valid, and used for the analysis to make inferences and final generalizations. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistical tools of percentage and mean rating were used to analyze the demographic data and data relating to research questions, respectively. While the inferential statistics of Pearson Correlation and multiple regression were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 alpha level. The study based on the analysis revealed that the influence of TLA on the commitment of employees is positive and significant ($R = 0.717$). $P=0.000$). Specifically, it showed with $\beta = 0.229$, $P=0.009 < 0.05$, that appreciation/recognition of employees for doing their jobs well influences EC positively and significantly. With $\beta = 0.510$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$, that promotion and salary increase positively and significantly influence EC and with $\beta = 0.185$, $P = 0.017 < 0.05$ that contingency punishment for not performing well has a positive and slightly significant influence on EC. Additionally, the R^2 value of 0.515 suggests that 51.5% of the EC in the organizations can be explained by the TL (promotion and salary increase, appreciation/recognition and contingency punishment). Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that school management supplement disciplinary or correctional systems with motivational as well as supportive strategies so as to realize sustained EC.*

KEYWORDS: Transactional Leadership Approach, Appreciation and Recognition, Promotion and Salary increase, Contingency Punishment, Employee Commitment.



INTRODUCTION

Leadership remains one of the most critical determinants of organizational success, because employees require direction, influence, and motivation to perform effectively. Scholars have long argued that the extent to which human resources (employees) are committed to their duties significantly affects the achievement of organizational goals. Consequently, a leadership approach has emerged as a central factor influencing employee interest, commitment, and performance (Sadia & Aman, 2018; Igbomor & Olisemenogor, 2023; Akpomiemie, Aruoren, Omoye, Igbomor & Olisemenogor, 2026). Effective leadership mobilizes employees and resources toward desired outcomes, while inappropriate leadership practices can hinder performance and weaken organizational effectiveness (Nwankwo, Mbah & Okeke, 2017; Akparep, Jengre & Mogre, 2019).

Organizations adopt different leadership approaches, some strict and control-oriented, others supportive and motivational. Among these approaches, transactional leadership (TL) is widely known for its structured, exchange-based approach. Rooted in the concept of “transaction,” it operates on the principle that employees receive rewards for meeting expectations and may face corrective measures when performance falls short. As Lynette (2023) noted, transactional relationships are built on clear expectations of give-and-take. Historically traced to Max Weber, TL emphasizes rules, discipline, and methodical control (Osazevaru & Olisemenogor, 2024). Contemporary scholars further describe it as a leadership pattern that uses rewards and punishments to secure optimal performance (Ben & Pratt, 2022), blending both task-oriented and people-oriented elements (Puspa et al., 2019).

Literature suggests that TL through contingent rewards such as recognition, promotion, and salary increases, as well as through corrective actions, influences performance (Osazevaru & Olisemenogor, 2024) and could also influence EC. The “carrot-and-stick” mechanism (Abasilim, Gberebie & Osibanjo, 2019) ensures that employees are compensated for meeting expectations and avoid punishment by adhering to organizational goals. However, scholars also caution that TL may not motivate employees beyond the minimum required to avoid sanctions or obtain extrinsic rewards (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). Yet, as Alethia (2018) observes, transactional leaders can still shape commitment by building structured leader–follower relationships.

In the educational sector, particularly in private secondary schools, concerns have been raised about declining employee diligence, missed deadlines, and inconsistent performance despite the availability of skilled personnel (Eromafuru & Emorhievwunu, 2024). These challenges have prompted school administrators to adopt stricter leadership approaches, including punitive measures, to enforce compliance. Such practices may influence employees’ performance and commitment, positively or negatively.

The rationale for the study is that while leadership approach is widely recognized as a major factor affecting EC and performance, not all leadership approaches are suitable for all organizational contexts. Although TL has been praised for its effectiveness across various settings, it remains unclear whether its dual components of reward and punishment produce similar effects in educational institutions, particularly among private secondary school employees. Furthermore, existing literature tends to emphasize the reward component of TL, with limited attention given to the punitive aspect and its implications for EC. Additionally, the researchers could not find empirical studies examining TL within educational



organizations, especially in private secondary schools in the Ukwuani and Ethiope East Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Delta State, Nigeria. These gaps accentuate the need to investigate how TL practices influence EC in this specific context. Thus, our study is initiated to examine the influence of TL with consideration of the reward and punishment dimensions as variables on EC. The study specifically seeks to:

1. Examine the level of influence that appreciation and recognition has on EC.
2. Ascertain the influence the promotion and salary increase have on EC.
3. Examine the extent to which the use of contingent punishment affects EC.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised.

- i. What is the relationship between appreciation and recognition and EC?
- ii. What is the linkage between promotion and salary increase and EC?
- iii. What is the association between contingent punishment and EC?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in line with the objectives

- H₀₁. Appreciation and recognition do not have a significant influence on EC
- H₀₂. Promotion and salary increase does not significantly influence EC
- H₀₃. Contingent punishment does not have a significant effect on EC

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leader, Leadership and Leadership Approach

A leader is one or more individuals who choose, prepare, train, and influence one or more followers with a variety of talents, skills, and abilities. They also direct the followers to accomplish the organization's goals and objectives, encouraging them to voluntarily and enthusiastically invest their physical, emotional, and spiritual energies in a coordinated effort to accomplish those goals (Franco & Stone, 2018). Leadership, according to Rajoria, Sharma, Meenakshi, and Bushra (2022), is the capacity of an organization's management to set and achieve challenging goals; respond swiftly and efficiently when necessary; outperform their competitors; and empower employees. Leadership is among the determining factors to the viability of any organization, group and institution (Khalik, Musyaffa & Hapzi, 2021; Igbomor, 2024a). In dealing with followers or subordinates in the work setting, leaders adopt diverse methods and techniques to make followers willingly and convincingly work towards set goals. These techniques and methods are termed "leadership approaches" in the literature. Leadership approach reflects what the employer/manager does in influencing his/her employees to realize their vision (Khalik et al., 2021). Leadership approach as described by Rivai (2017) is the way leaders behave with their subordinates to persuade them to make a



significant contribution to the endeavors of achieving organizational performance. This, in a way, implies that employers/managers/supervisors can influence morale, quality of work, and the level of achievement of individuals, groups, and the organization through their approach to leadership. In our modern organizational setting, employers/managers/supervisors as leaders adopt several leadership approaches in dealing with subordinates in a business organization based on the prevailing situation. Among such leadership approaches is the TLA.

Transactional Leadership Approach (TLA)

TLA is a leading pattern in which the leader rewards employees or subordinates for their hard work and excellent performance or disciplines them if their output is subpar (Ngwama & Ogaga-Oghene, 2022). The authority to delegate duties and to reward or punish employees based on their performance is what Kungwola (2023) referred to as TL. According to Omoye, Aruoren, Tarurhor, and Eruvwe (2024), TL is a leadership approach that emphasizes communication between leaders and followers. It emphasizes the use of rewards and penalties to inspire followers as well as the clarity of roles, tasks, and expectations. In the same vein, Udayanga (2020) suggested that the TLA consists of two dimensions: task orientation and people orientation. The task-oriented leader is depicted as one who shows little concern for the personal growth or satisfaction of employees. Their primary focus is on ensuring that workers achieve established goals by any means necessary when they have been assigned specific tasks, defined procedures, scheduled work, and clarified expectations. These leaders promote hard work, emphasize the need to meet deadlines, maximize productivity, and closely monitor their employees. On the other hand, the people-oriented aspect of TL is characterized by a leadership approach that promotes an environment filled with emotional support and warmth as well as friendliness. TL have gained the attention of research due to the transactional leader's attribute of monitoring deviation from established normative standards and giving more concentration to the trade relationships between themselves and their subordinates/followers (Hieng, Hum, Seoung, Sam, Phorn, & Savuth, 2024).

Dimensions of Transactional Leadership Approach

Employers use a transactional leadership pattern because workers need to be closely observed regarding their performance within an organization, and the transactional approaches involve providing positive incentives for meeting established goals or administering negative consequences when goals are not met (Muliyati, Wenny, Muhammad, & Thamrin, 2023). According to the outcome of a study by Hargis cited in Hieng et al. (2024), TL is associated with the use of contingent punishments and rewards. It suggests that the TLA operates in the dimension of contingency reward, which is a reward for accomplishment or compliance, and the use of punishment for non-compliance, which some authors call active management. Thus, this study viewed TL from the dimensions of contingency rewards for work well done and punishment for work not well done.

Contingency Reward: Rewards are compensation provided by an organization to its employees in acknowledgment of their dedication, time, loyalty, and contributions while fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. The use of contingent rewards is based on a trading framework where the leader and subordinates work together to achieve the organization's goals, for which the leader provides incentives or rewards for their achievement. A reward



can be either tangible or intangible and is given by an organization to its employees whether deliberately or not, as recognition for their role or work performance. Contingent rewards such as praise are used by supervisors or organizations when employees complete tasks on schedule, ahead of schedule, or to maintain subordinates' high level of productivity at various points during the completion process (Hieng et al., 2024). There are diverse forms of contingency rewards used by modern-day leaders or managers in the work setting. However, this study compressed them into two: appreciation/recognition and promotion and salary increase.

Appreciation and recognition: Recognition refers to acknowledging specific achievements, behaviors, or results, like hitting a target or completing a project. Appreciation is the act of valuing employees' efforts, attitudes, or character. In the workplace, acknowledging and celebrating an employee's achievements, efforts, and services to the organization is referred to as recognition. It is a type of constructive criticism that helps employees demonstrate the desired actions and values. Increasing morale among staff members, enthusiasm, and happiness at work are the main goals of recognition. Organizations may encourage a mindset of gratitude and inspire workers to continuously provide their best work by acknowledging and rewarding their coworkers (the Culture Partner Team, 2019). Verbal praise, notes in written form of gratitude, public acknowledgments, rewards, and incentives are just a few of the ways that recognition can be given (Culture Partner Team, 2019). Giving employees verbal praise is an easy yet effective approach to acknowledge their efforts. It enables employers to thank employees individually, highlighting particular accomplishments and conveying gratitude for their diligence. This kind of acknowledgment improves relationships at work in addition to raising enthusiasm.

Both appreciation and recognition are essential dimensions of contingency rewards in any workplace. Recognition boosts motivation by reinforcing desired behaviors, while appreciation fosters belonging and emotional well-being (Robbins, 2019). In our modern business environment, nearly every workplace, regardless of industry, has made recognition and appreciation for a job well done a part of their strategies to reinforce and to encourage greater work (Lorenz, 2022).

Promotion and salary increase: Salary is a fixed, regular payment, typically paid every month by an employer to an employee. Promotion in the workplace setting is a situation where an employer advances an employee to a higher position with increased responsibilities, authority, and usually a higher salary or benefits. Many organizations reward employees for good jobs and achievements by increasing salary (pay above the fixed and regular salary) and promoting them to a higher position than they were. This serves as a reward for performance.

Punishment: Punishment is described by Nainggolan, Anhar, and Wulandari (2024) as negative actions or consequences that are imposed on individuals in response to their violation or undesirable behaviors. It is a disciplinary measure involving the threat of penalty or actual penalty aimed at enhancing employee performance, ensuring compliance with established guidelines, and teaching employees who breach rules a lesson. Punishment acts as a type of negative reinforcement that can serve as a motivational tool when administered appropriately and judiciously, following the principles of discipline (Nurul, Toni, Ni-Nyoman & Qomariah, 2024). Punishment is a feature of transactional leaders who use negative rewards not because they are cruel, but because they want to ensure that employees are always on track, focused, and trying to avoid missing deadlines. As noted by Nainggolan et



al. (2024), punishment aims to promote adherence to rules and avert unwanted actions in the workplace. This is achieved by sanctioning employees who fail to meet job expectations or exhibit undesirable behavior. According to Sayadi in Alethia (2018), this aspect of transactional leaders is a corrective leadership approach that removes barriers to goal success and is vigilant in ensuring correct and timely achievement of planned organizational objectives. By setting punishments, employers continuously monitor employees to ensure that they do not make errors, and the flow of work is excellent.

There are diverse forms of punishment employers adopt, ranging from sanctions, suspension, demotion, salary reduction, giving extra work, to termination of appointment. According to Hieng et al. (2024), transactional leaders use contingent punishments like suspensions when performance quality or quantity is below standards or when tasks are not completed at all. Employers who are transactional in their leadership approach apply punishment of reducing an employee's pay. For example, if a worker is consistently coming late to work or staying longer than the allowed time for lunch breaks, the employer or director, being transactional, forces the employee back into line using the threat of removal of a bonus or even immediate dismissal to force the employee to obey (Quain 2019).

Employee Commitment (EC)

The word "commitment," as described by the Cambridge dictionary means a promise or firm decision to do something, the willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2024). As noted by Kelvin (2020), EC is the level of dedication an employee feels to their employer's organization (Igbomor, 2024b). Also, EC is the psychological integration of an individual with their organization through a sense of belonging, ownership of the organization's objectives, and readiness to take on difficult tasks. Nyone and Vinazor (2021) perceived EC as the positive attitudes that employees have toward the principles, culture, mission and objective of the organization they work for.

EC has been widely explored in organizational behavior literature, with scholars generally agreeing on three major dimensions: affective, continuous, and normative commitment. These dimensions capture the emotional and moral bases of employees' attachment to their organizations. Affective commitment represents the emotional bond employees form with their organization. Employees who exhibit effective commitment identify strongly with organizational values and willingly invest effort to support organizational goals. Kelvin (2020) noted that such employees remain with the organization because their personal values align with its mission, creating a sense of belonging and purpose. Continuous commitment is grounded in the perceived cost of leaving the organization. Employees remain because they believe that leaving would result in significant losses—financial, social, or professional. The IGI Global Scientific Publishing Team (2024) emphasizes that continued commitment is often driven by fear of losing income, prestige, friendships, or other valued benefits. This form of commitment reflects a rational decision to stay due to the high cost of exit. Normative commitment reflects an employee's sense of duty or obligation to remain with the organization. Employees with strong normative commitment believe that staying is the right thing to do, often because the organization has invested in their development or because cultural norms emphasize loyalty.



Across all sectors, including the educational sector, committed employees tend to demonstrate certain behavioral attributes. These include a strong work ethic, adaptability, effective problem-solving, teamwork, continuous learning and resilience under pressure (NTI, 2024; HR Future Team, 2024). These behaviors reflect the practical manifestations of commitment and highlight its importance for organizational effectiveness.

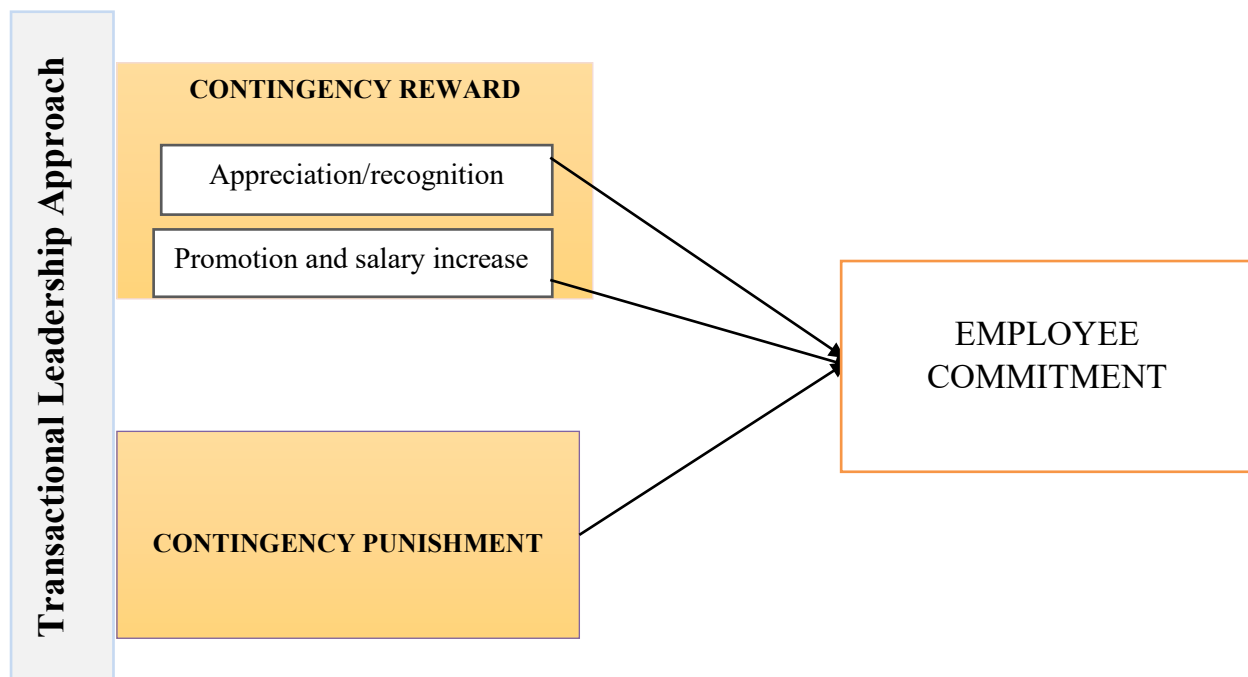
Transactional Leadership Approach and Employee Commitment

Due to the reward and punishment features of TLA, scholars have posited that TLA is positively and significantly correlated with performance (Muliyati, et al., 2023). According to Raziq, Ahmad, Malik, Borini, and Shabaz (2018), workers are more dedicated when they are certain that their efforts will be recognized and compensated.

Regarding appreciation/recognition for work well done and EC, it is said that "appreciation is an application for more." When an employee perceives that his/her efforts and contributions to the organization are recognized and appreciated, such an employee will be motivated to want to do more for the organization and not to do less. This attitude will make the employee develop some level of dedication or commitment to the job. In the study by Nainggolan, et al (2024) it was observed that employees are more likely to be driven and dedicated (committed) to achieving higher performance when they feel appreciated and recognized. This eventually boosts output and organizational performance. From their study on effects of employee recognition programs on engagement and retention Arunraj, Murugesan, Pandi, and Sivasubramanian (2024) reported a positive impact of well-designed recognition programs on employee engagement and retention.

Regarding promotion and salary increase for work well done and EC, Ojeleye (2017) posited that a salary system of an organization provides attraction to employees to perform their job duties with all efficiency, commitment, and passion. Salary motivates and triggers the best out of an employee since their source of income, which determines their standard of living, is rooted in salary. Similarly, Juneja (2015) noted that employees' job performance is influenced by salary, wages and incentives.

Concerning punishment, many organizations often adopt some forms of punishment to ensure compliance with the organization's objectives. When employees exhibit behaviors that contradict the organization's expected behaviors, punishment is administered. Employees who have experienced punishment may seek to improve their work performance due to feelings of fear and self-protection from the future possibilities of punishment (Gligor, Gölgeci, Garg, Idug, Ekezie, Feiz & Ferhat, 2025). This means that punishment can force employees to be more committed to their jobs to avoid being reprimanded or punished by superiors. Wang, Wang, Seifert, and Seifert (2017) posited that any form of pay cuts, whether cuts in benefits, overtime pay, bonuses, allowances, pensions, basic pay, specifically demoralizes employees. This means that when employers adopt pay reduction as a punishment for employees' non-compliance or not being able to complete a task, it will demoralize the employees. Ali (2020) posited that management behavior in the use of hard measures can lead to manipulative obedience of workers; resistance; and avoidance, such as not being open and being inclined to pretend, among employees. To reduce these outcomes, Ali (2020) suggested that the application of punishment must be done with wise consideration.

Fig. 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Author's conception, (2026)

Empirical Review

Saxena (2025) examined the relationship between employee recognition programs and their effects on workplace morale and employee retention rates in order to understand how different types of employee recognition affect job satisfaction, engagement levels, and long-term retention by analyzing multiple recognition frameworks through published literature, surveys, and quantitative data analysis. Results show that well-designed recognition programs significantly boost employee morale, which lowers attrition and boosts organizational commitment. According to the research, workers who receive frequent recognition are more productive, loyal, and satisfied with their jobs than those who work for organizations with little recognition policy.

Hyeon and Shin's (2025) study examined how workplace factors, recognition, fairness, leadership, and workload affect important employee outcomes. The study analyzes data from 25,285 employees using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that employee engagement is greatly increased by recognition, but fairness and involvement also have a positive impact, but to an insignificant degree. Transformational leadership has two functions: it lowers burnout and increases engagement.

Deele and Oluwuo's (2023) study looked at the connection between promotions and job engagement of teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. They collected data from a sample of 170 school principals using a questionnaire. After analyzing the data using basic linear regression, they discovered that teachers' job engagement in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State was positively correlated with promotions. They recommended that promotions for teachers who have demonstrated exceptional performance



should be regularly supported by the schools Board in order to encourage them to actively participate in their jobs, which is essential for increased teacher productivity.

The study by Zaki, Ahmad, and Radzi (2017) looked at the characteristics of leaders that affected their use of both contingent and non-contingent punishment as well as the effects of punishment on EC to the organization and job satisfaction. Thus, Kuala Lumpur Golden Triangle's five-star hotels' F&B staff provided the study's data. The drop-off and pick-up approach was used to collect the data. In this study, multiple regression analysis was used in accordance with the specific goals. The findings showed a substantial nexus between the two categories of leader disciplinary behavior contingent and non-contingent punishment, and EC to the organization and job happiness. Additionally, this study discovered that whereas non-contingent punishment had a detrimental effect on EC to the organization and job satisfaction, contingent punishment had a beneficial effect.

Nurul, Toni, Ni-Nyoman, and Qomariah (2024) examined the impact of punishment and discipline on the performance of employees in the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) using a sample of 123; obtained data through observation and interview; and analyzed the same using descriptive analysis, validity tests, reliability tests of research data, and direct influence tests. The results of their study showed that punishment in the form of partial sanctions has a negative and insignificant impact on the performance of the employees.

The study conducted by Nainggolan, Anhar, and Wulandari (2024) with a sample of 58 hotel employees examined how work discipline, rewards, and punishments affect performance at Hotel Maxone Balikpapan. The performance reports of employees from 2018 to 2022, covering a period of 5 years, served as the source for the research data. After analyzing their data using regression and correlation statistical methods, they discovered that work discipline positively and significantly affects employee performance; rewards also have a positive and significant effect, while punishment was found to negatively impact employee performance significantly.

The study, which examined the effect of reward and punishment on employee performance, was carried out by Dedi, Ermeila, Sutinah, Ida, Delfiazi, Ade, and Feni (2024). They used Questionnaires via Google Forms as a medium in data collection from 159 respondents. Copious amounts of documentation were used to collect secondary data. They utilized regression and Structural equation modeling for data analysis. The study found that punishment has no significant effect on job learning, but rewards do. They reported that neither rewards nor punishment has a significant impact on employee performance.

The study of Banyuwangi District Civil Servants by Yeni, Nurul, and Toni (2020) examined the effect of discipline, supervision and compensation on the work performance of civil servants. The population of this study was 10,300 civil servants in the Banyuwangi Regency Government. The total sample of 375 employees was selected using the systematic sampling technique, where each member of the population has an equal opportunity to be selected as a research sample. The data was analyzed using Smart PLS software application version 3.0. The results showed that compensation, supervision, and employee discipline, in isolation, have a positive and significant effect on work performance.

The study by Ngwama and Ogaga-Oghene (2022) examined the influence of transformational leadership and TLA on EC in a private Christian mission university setting with a sample of 89 staff members, from which data was collected using a questionnaire. They used



proportional and simple random sampling methods as well as the Correlation coefficient and simple regression analysis to analyze data. Their findings showed that the transactional approach of leadership adopted in the University affected EC significantly.

Wijaya, Susilo, Christin, Dozen, and Silvani (2024) examined the impact of TL on work engagement, with organizational commitment and work motivation among 116 employees of the service sector. Data were collected with the aid of a questionnaire, analyzed using the SMART PLS method, and reported that TL impacts organizational commitment and work motivation for work engagement.

Babagana and Nura (2022) investigated the relationship between the transactional approach of leadership and commitment and productivity. The study was carried out among 649 employees of poultry SMEs in Kano metropolitan, from which data were obtained with the aid of a questionnaire and analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed that the transactional pattern of leadership exerts a positive impact on commitment and improvement in productivity.

Focusing on transactional and transformational leadership approaches, Jekelle (2021) examined the impact of these leadership approaches on EC. A cross-sectional survey was carried out involving 151 employees from a public sector organization in Abuja, Nigeria. The study utilized a quantitative methodology to gather data through a questionnaire and employed simple regression analysis for data evaluation. The findings indicated a favorable correlation between TL and EC

A survey by Shatha (2019) analyzed the relationship between TL and EC among workers of construction companies in Jordan. The study sampled 240, obtained data through a questionnaire, employed Structural Equation Modeling strategy with the aid of IBM-SPSS-AMOS 24.0 for data analysis, and found that the contribution of the transactional approach of leadership to employee commitment is significantly positive. This suggests that TLA has a strong positive influence on EC.

Theoretical Framework

In order to explain the reasons behind the transactional leaders' use of reward and punishment, which this study described as a hard and soft patterns, and how it relates to employees' commitment, this study adopted theory X and theory Y of McGregor.

Theory X

Theory X is based on a pessimistic view of human nature and assumes that the average human being dislikes work and will avoid it if possible; the average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibilities, has relatively little ambition, and wants security. Thus, they must be supervised and properly monitored. They are to be threatened with punishment to motivate them to make an effort and be committed to their job to achieve organizational goals.



Theory Y

This theory believes that humans (employees) are not stubborn but are sensible enough to carry out their duties freely and willingly without force or coercive measures. The assumption of McGregor in the theory Y is that

- a. Applying mental and physical energy to work is just as natural as playing or relaxing;
- b. Sanctions and external influence are not the only ways to motivate people to work toward an organization's goals. However, man will use self-control and self-direction to achieve his goals.
- c. Under appropriate and typical circumstances, the average person learns to both accept and pursue responsibility.
- d. The ordinary person's intellectual capacity is only half exploited in the current world; and
- e. The rewards that come with achieving goals influence a person's commitment to them.

This shows that, behind every management action, behavior or decision, there are assumptions about human nature and human behaviors.

In relation to this study, the use of punishment by transactional leaders may be based on the theory X proposal that management should continuously monitor employees to ensure they are performing up to expectations and use punishment or other harsh measures to keep them under control and ensure they follow instructions in order to achieve organizational goals. If an employee does not comply, they will face punishment and sanctions.

Under theory X, as affirmed by Nwankwo, Mbah, and Okeke (2017), management approaches to motivation range from hard to soft approaches. A hard approach to motivation relies on coercion and implicit threats, which are the hard attributes of TLA. Thus, if the organizational goals are to be met, theory X managers must rely on threat and punishment to gain their employee's compliance.

On the other hand, management who support theory Y act in ways that are consistent with its assumptions. These managers/directors believe that workers will be responsible and that the incentives that come with achieving goals are what motivate them to stick with them. These incentives are what will drive workers to take action. Workers are generally content when their workplace is free from stress and anxiety. According to Nwachukwu (2015), if we believe that an employee is at work because he needs money to satisfy his physiological needs, the manager/director will attempt to motivate him with money and threaten him with loss of employment (job security need) if he does not put in effort to accomplish organizational goals. Furthermore, a larger portion of our workforce today consists of members of generation Y, who, according to Martin, Jauhar, Lee and Abdul (2015), love freedom and flexibility and dislike micromanagement (control).



METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design, according to Shona (2019), is a method in educational and behavioral research that involves the researcher trying to observe variables without being able to manipulate the variables. It assesses public opinions, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors using a questionnaire. This method was therefore adopted for this study due to the nature of the study, which tends to investigate the relationship between TLA and EC from the view of teachers in selected private secondary schools in Ukwuani and Ethiope East Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria.

The population comprised 360 teachers from thirty (30) selected private secondary schools, of which 189 were sampled with the aid of the Taro Yamane formula and Bowley's proportion formula.

The instrument for data collection was a closed-ended questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale of "Strongly Agree (SA)," "Agree (A)," "Undecided (U)," "Disagree (D)," and "Strongly Disagree (SD)." For reliability of the instrument, a test was carried out using the Cronbach Alpha statistical tool with the aid of SPSS (Statistical package for social sciences). The outcome is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Appreciation/recognition	0.798	5
Promotion and salary increase	0.819	5
Contingency punishment	0.818	5
Employee Commitment	0.729	5

Source: *Author's Computation, (2026)*

According to Khairul, Syuhaida, and Saleh (2018), a coefficient of 0.60 or greater is considered a good level and is acceptable.

Data obtained were analyzed using frequency count and simple mean methods for the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression statistics.

Model Specification

$$EC = f(AR, PSI, CP)$$

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1AR + \beta_2PSI + \beta_3CP + E... (1)$$

Where:

AR = Appreciation and recognition

PSI = Promotion and salary increase

CP = Contingency punishment

EC = Employee commitment



E = Error terms

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 189 questionnaires were administered to the study respondents. However, 18, accounting for 9.5% were not returned, and only 171, accounting for 90.5% were retrieved, valid, and used for the analysis.

Demographic Data

Regarding gender, Table 2 showed that 35% (59) of the teachers are male, while 65% (112) are female. This suggests that there are more female than male teachers in the sampled schools used for the study. For marital status, 34% (58) are singles, while 66% (113) are married. With regard to academic qualifications, it was shown that 1% (2) are SSCE holders, 9% (16) are N.C.E. holders, 87% (148) are HND/BA/BSC, 3% (5) are master's degree holders. For work experience, 36% (61) of the teachers have work experience between 0 and 5 years, 43% (74) have between 6 and 10 years, and 21% (36) have between 11 and 15 years of work experience. This indicates that the majority of the teachers in the selected educational organizations have worked for at least 5 years.

Table 2: Demographic Data

Demographic Variables Parameters		Count	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	59	35%
	Female	112	65%
	Total	171	100
Marital Status	Single	58	34%
	Married	113	66%
	Total	171	100%
Academic Qualification	SSCE	2	1%
	NCE/OND	16	9%
	HND/BA/BSC	148	87%
	Masters	5	3%
	Total	171	100%
Work Experience	0-5 years	61	36%
	6-10 years	74	43%
	11-15 years	36	21%
	Total	171	100%

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)



Analysis of Data Related to Research Question

The simple mean method was adopted to analyze data relating to the research questions. **Decision Rule:** A benchmark of **2.50** was used. Where the mean for each statement is lower than the benchmark of 2.50, such a statement or item is rejected due to low positive responses, but if it is higher than the benchmark, it is accepted.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between appreciation and recognition and EC?

Table 3 presents the result on the link between appreciation/recognition and EC. From Table 3, it is observed that the positive responses in all the items outweighed the negative responses. This is evident from the higher mean scores above 2.50 (4.08, 4.11, 4.40, 4.21, and 3.57 > 2.50), indicating full acceptance of the measures of appreciation and recognition (items 1 – 5).

Table 3: Appreciation and Recognition and Employee Commitment

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
The management of this institution tries to reward employees for meeting objectives and standards	4.08	0.92	Accepted
My zeal for work increases when I am recognized for doing a good job	4.11	0.64	Accepted
Management has a way of putting a smile on my face for being commitment to my job	4.40	0.82	Accepted
The management of this institution always appreciate employees for performing up to expectations	4.21	0.77	Accepted
Lack of appreciation for being a dedicated staff member can weaken teachers' dedication to their jobs	3.57	1.27	Accepted

Source: *Author's Computation, (2026)*

Research Question Two: What is the linkage between promotion and salary increase and EC?

Items presented in Table 4 are measures used to examine the respondents' views on promotion and salary increase in the organization to determine the influence on their commitment. The analysis in Table 4 showed that the positive responses in all the measures outweighed the negative responses. This is based on the mean scores of 4.22, 4.14, 3.96, 4.21, and 4.03 > 2.50, respectively, which indicates respondents' acceptance of all the measures of promotion and salary increase (items 1–5). This suggests that the employees are motivated by contingency rewards in the form of promotion and salary increase. This may have some level of influence on their attitude towards their job in the organizations.

**Table 4: Promotion and Salary Increase and Employee Commitment**

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
I am eager to work when the organization places emphasis on teachers' promotion and career advancement opportunities	4.22	0.84	Accepted
Promotion based on performance can encourage teachers to perform better and be dedicated to their work	4.14	0.92	Accepted
I am more dedicated to my job and the organization's objectives when my salary is increased	3.96	0.82	Accepted
I like the organization's practice of compensating teachers for extra work or overtime work when the need arises	4.21	0.85	Accepted
Poor salary or compensation for work is a no-no for me as an employee	4.03	0.81	Accepted

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)

Research Question Three: What is the association between contingent punishment and EC?

Items presented in Table 5 were used to examine the respondents' view of the use of contingency punishment as a way of ensuring compliance with rules and goal achievement. Table 5 showed that the positive responses in all the measures outweighed the negative responses, given the mean scores of 4.04, 4.33, 3.94, 3.91, and 4.08 > 2.50, respectively. This suggests that the employees are aware of the use of contingency punishment as a way of ensuring full compliance with rules and goal achievement within the institution.

Table 5: Contingency Punishment and Employee Commitment

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
I am not pleased to see that my salary/wage is being reduced by the management over task I did not complete	4.04	0.84	Accepted
The management of this institution does not spare employees from punishment for not keeping to objectives and standards	4.33	0.73	Accepted
I get scared of suspension from official duties as punishment for not performing my task well	3.94	0.90	Accepted
Threat of being given extra work by management makes me want to comply to achieve work objectives	3.91	0.82	Accepted
I am always at work at the right time to avoid any form of punishment	4.08	0.97	Accepted

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)

Items in Table 6 were used to examine the commitment of employees within the selected institution. From the result depicted in Table 6, it showed that the measures of commitment were all accepted by the respondents with mean scores of 4.44, 4.45, 4.10, 4.16, and 4.08 > 2.50. This indicates a reasonably high level of employee commitment in the selected institutions.

**Table 6: Employee Commitment**

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
I am still in this organization because other institutions may not offer me the kind of opportunities I have here	4.44	0.85	Accepted
I am emotionally attached to this organization, but I just don't know why	4.45	0.69	Accepted
It will not be beneficial to me if I leave this organization right now	4.10	0.72	Accepted
I prefer to stay loyal to my organization because it has invested a lot of time and money on me	4.16	0.67	Accepted
I try to comply with and do my job well to avoid poor performance that warrant punishment	4.08	1.08	Accepted

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)

Testing of Hypothesis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the multiple regression statistical tools at the 0.05 alpha level were employed to test the hypotheses formulated in the study. Complete correlation between two variables is expressed by either +1 or -1. When one variable increases (dependent variable) as the other increases (independent variable), the correlation is positive; when one decreases as the other increases, it is a negative correlation. Complete absence of correlation is represented by 0.

Inferential Rules: If the Sig. value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$), the null hypothesis shall be rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Meaning, the independent variable has a significant influence/relationship with the dependent variable.

Table 7 presents the Pearson correlation statistics between the independent variables (AR, PSI, and CP) and the dependent variable (EC). As depicted in Table 7, coefficients of 0.587, 0.622, and 0.343 were obtained between appreciation & recognition (AR), promotion and salary increase (PSI), and contingency punishment (CP), respectively, and employees' commitment (EC). It shows that each of the dimensions of the transactional leadership approach (AR, PSI and CP) has a positive relationship with EC. Nevertheless, the coefficient of 0.343 suggests a weak positive association between CP and EC while others (appreciation & recognition, promotion & salary increase) have a strong positive association with EC.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Matrix Showing the Association between the Dependent and Independent Variables

	Employee commitment (EC)	Appreciation and Recognition (AR)	Promotion and Salary Increase (PSI)	Contingency Punishment (CP)
Employee commitment (EC)	1			
Appreciation and Recognition (AR)	0.587	1		
Promotion and Salary Increase (PSI)	0.622	0.471	1	



Contingency Punishment (CP)	0.343	0.638	0.024	1
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Source: *Author's Computation, (2026) SPSS V.23*

Multiple Regression Analysis

To further determine the degree of influence between the variables, the data were subjected to regression analysis. In a regression model, the t-value and the R-value are key criteria for determining whether the model is significant. For t , the greater the magnitude of t , the greater the evidence against the null hypothesis, i.e., there is greater evidence that there is a significant effect, and the closer ' t ' is to 0, the more likely there is no significant effect. For R (R and R-squared), the R indicates the strength of the correlation between the two variables, while R-squared tells us how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable.

Table 8a showed a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.229$, a t-value of $2.635 > t$ -critical value of 2.353, and a P-value of $0.009 < 0.05$, indicating that appreciation and recognition (AR) have a significantly positive influence on the commitment of employees. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis sustained, indicating that appreciation/recognition has a significantly positive influence on the commitment of employees (teachers) of private secondary schools in Ukwuani and Ethiope East Local Government Areas.

Regarding promotion and salary increase, the result showed a $\beta = 0.510$, a t-value of $7.614 > t$ -critical value of 2.353, and a P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, suggesting that promotion and salary increase (PSI) positively and significantly influence EC. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, leading to acceptance of the alternate hypothesis.

More so, with regard to contingency punishment (CP), a coefficient of $\beta = 0.185$ which is quite low; a t-value of 2.407, slightly greater than the t-critical value of 2.353 and a P-value of $0.017 < 0.05$ were found between contingency punishment (CP) and EC. Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, contingent punishment has a significant positive effect on EC.

Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 2.397 for appreciation and recognition (AR), 1.431 for promotion and salary increase (PSI) and 1.882 for contingency punishment (CP) clearly suggest the absence of multicollinearity issue in the regression model. In other words, the independent variables (AR, PSI and CP) are not too correlated.



Table 8a: Multiple regression Analysis Showing the Regression Coefficient Values of each Dimension of the Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-val	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		Df	F-val	T-Crit
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF			
1	(Constant)	-5.455	2.266		-2.407	0.017			3	59.019	2.353
	Appreciation and Recognition	0.233	0.088	0.229	2.635	0.009	0.417	2.397			
	Promotion and Salary Increase	0.907	0.119	0.510	7.614	0.000	0.699	1.431			
	Contingency Punishment	0.162	0.067	0.185	2.407	0.017	0.531	1.882			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)SPSS V.23

Table 8b showed $R = 0.717$, R -squared = 0.515, Adj. $R^2 = 0.506$, model fit 'F-value' as 59.019, and P-value $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant as AR, PSI and CP statistically predict EC. The R^2 value of 0.515 suggests that 51.5% of the EC in the organizations can be explained by the TL (promotion and salary increase, appreciation/recognition, and contingency punishment). Thus, the position is that adoption of TLA can influence up to 51.5% of EC in the selected private secondary schools in Ukwuani and Ethiope East Local Government Areas, Delta State.

Table 8b: Multiple Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R-squared Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.717 ^a	0.515	0.506	1.985	0.515	59.019	3	167	0.000

a. Predictors: Constant Promotion and Salary Increase, Appreciation and Recognition, Contingency Punishment

Source: Author's Computation, (2026)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined how different dimensions of TL (AR, PSI and CP) influence EC in selected private secondary schools. The study revealed that AR has a significant positive influence on EC. This suggests that when employees feel regarded and acknowledged for their contributions, they are more likely to demonstrate dedication, loyalty, and a willingness to put in more effort. This aligns with prior studies indicating that recognition enhances job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and retention which are strong factors of EC (Saxena, 2025; Hyeon & Shin, 2025; Arunraj et al., 2024). This finding also strongly aligns with



Theory Y, which assumes that employees are naturally motivated, seek responsibility, and respond positively to intrinsic rewards such as AR. Under Theory Y assumptions, leaders believe that employees will commit more deeply when their psychological needs such as esteem and self-actualization are met. The significant effect of AR on EC in this study reinforces Theory Y perspective that supportive, participatory, and motivational leadership practices foster stronger employee attachment to the organization.

The study also found that PSI has a significant positive influence on EC in private secondary schools. This implies that employees who perceive that their efforts are rewarded through career advancement and improved remuneration are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization. This finding aligns with Deele and Oluwo (2023), who reported that promotion significantly predicts teachers' job engagement in senior secondary schools. Since engagement is a well-established antecedent of EC, this reinforces the conclusion that PSI strengthens EC.

Regarding the extent to which the use of CP affects EC in the educational setting, the study showed that transactional leaders' use of CP has a weak positive significant effect on EC in the secondary educational setting. This result suggests that when CP such as, warnings, corrective or disciplinary actions, or formal sanctions, is applied appropriately when there are violations of rules, it is linked to an increase in EC among secondary school teachers. Fundamentally, when CP is used in a conditional, concordant and straightforward manner, teachers will develop a stronger sense of accountability, responsibility and adherence to institutional standards, which can in turn enhance their commitment to the school. In other words, teachers may become more cognizant of the significance of their duties and the necessity to act professionally, which can progressively enhance their commitment to their work. This could probably happen because punitive measures often remind teachers that certain expectations and standards must be sustained within the school system. Consequently, teachers may give more attention to their duties, such as preparing lesson notes on time, attending classes regularly, maintaining proper conduct in their interactions with students and colleagues and completing assigned tasks effectively. This can encourage them to become more responsible, careful and dedicated in carrying out their duties. Overtime, it may also create a profound realization of seriousness toward work, since employees become more mindful of the consequences of misconduct or negligence. This finding is similar to the finding of Zaki et al. (2017) that adoption of TLA of punishments positively and significantly affects EC in the organization.

Conclusively, the influence of TL (AR, PSI and CP) on EC is significant and TLA accounts for 51.5% of the variance in EC. This indicates that reward and punishment significantly shape employees' attitudes toward their work and organization. This aligns with findings by Babagana and Nura (2022) and Alemayehu and Batisa (2020), who reported that TL positively influences various forms of EC (affective, continuance, and normative). TL is fundamentally rooted in Theory X assumptions, emphasizing control, monitoring, and contingent reinforcement. The substantial influence of TL found in this study suggests that while Theory X-based practices remain relevant in educational organizations, they are most effective when complemented by Theory Y-aligned strategies such as recognition, empowerment, and developmental rewards. The combined evidence indicates that employees respond best to a balanced approach that integrates both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational mechanisms.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored how TLA specifically AR, PSI and CP affect EC within the secondary school educational sector. The findings reveal that while TL has the capability to motivate and strengthen EC, its effectiveness depends on the nature of the contingencies applied. The study demonstrated that contingent rewards, particularly AR and PSI, have a strong and positive influence on EC. In addition, CP was found to have a weak, positive and significant effect on EC. Although punishment may secure short-term compliance, it does not meaningfully enhance long-term dedication and may even undermine EC if applied insensitively or inconsistently. This highlights the importance of adopting a balanced approach to TL one that emphasizes positive reinforcement while using corrective measures sparingly and strategically.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that school management supplement disciplinary or correctional systems with motivational as well as supportive strategies so as to realize sustained employee commitment.

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