

# The Relationship between Leadership Self-Efficacy and Relational Leadership Behavior

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## **Abstract**

*This study's main objective is to examine the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and relational leadership behavior. In this study, the self-efficacy theory was considered as the underpinning theory. Furthermore, this study tends to be quantitative in approach as the use of face to face method of data collection with the aid of study questionnaire was utilized. A total number of one thousand questionnaires were administered on some branch managers of commercial banks. 457 questionnaires were considered for the analysis, thus several methods of data collection were used in the analysis of the data. The result of this study shows that only one dimension of leadership self-efficacy was found to be significantly related to relational leadership behavior. This study is however, found to have contributed to the self-efficacy leadership theory.*

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**Keywords:** *Leadership, Self-efficacy, Relational Leadership, Behavior*

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## **1. Introduction**

Several cases of inefficient performance, deterioration in performance or complete liquidation of various organizations around the world, have been leveled against managerial leadership. In situations where the performance of firms is exceptionally successful, or in cases where organizations experience collapse, the media and the stakeholders attribute it to the leadership abilities and deeds (Chein & Meindl, 1991; Treadway, Adams, Ranft & Ferries, 2009). One of the consequences of this trend is the intensifying of the complexity of the managerial work as managers are now held responsible for a wider array of responsibilities unlike before (Tsui & Ashford, 1994) as they have to also monitor the external changes embedded in the environment. Such cases of leadership concerns or problems of oversight functions are regularly or frequently reported in Europe, America, Asia (i.e. Korea, China, Malaysia, Indonesia) and other countries like Italy, Brazil, and Africa which in turn lead to deterioration of organizational performance or near liquidation.

As a result of the competitive nature of the business environment, organizations of all sizes need the right kind of leadership in order to survive. Those organizations that are privileged to have effective leaders have the ability to innovate, have the capacity to respond to the market and environmental changes; they are creative in addressing challenges and able to sustain higher performance (Vardiman et al., 2006; Amagoh, 2009). Effective leadership within an organization is often viewed as the foundation of organizational performance and growth (Bass, 1960; Kartz

& Khan, 1966; Yukl, 1998; Vardinaan, Houghton & Jinkerson, 2006) hence, organizations that fail to have effective leadership may likely fail to meet performance expectation. It is evident from previous research that leadership (at individual, group or organizational levels) is very important in helping an individual, group or organization to achieve the goals (Mat, 2008).

Tsui and Ashford (1994) pointed out that organisations and managers working in them are faced with several daunting realities. These realities sometimes direct organisations into the idea of downsizing, restructuring, mergers and retooling, with striking frequency, in response to the more turbulent, competitive and rapid advancements in the global market place. Consequently however, Leaders in various organisations around the world are today facing numerous challenges as they are regularly struggling to adapt to the accelerating changes in their organisations which is both internally and externally embedded in the environment (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997; Lord & Hall, 2005; Hannah, Avolio, Luthans & Harns 2008). This situation not only challenges the leaders' ability, their skills or knowledge but even questions their capabilities of leading their organisation or the psychological resources needed in meeting the ever accelerating demands of their managerial roles.

Traits such as self efficacy and high expectations are regularly given consideration by theorist especially in relation to effective leadership issues (House & Shamir, 1993; Chemers, 2001). Self-efficacy can be said to be particularly salient in a crisis situation as it is seen as a person's overall estimate of his/her ability to achieve requisite performance in achievement situations (Schunk, 1983; Eden & Zuk, 1995; Ross & Gray, 2006). Leadership self-efficacy is regarded as one of the most important variables that determines the individual, group and outcomes of the organisations' activities, as it plays a very important role, particularly under stress or demanding situation (Hoyt, 2005). LSE can be referred to as a person's perception of his/her general ability to lead (Murphy, 1992). Several researches conducted in the past have shown strong and positive association between self-efficacy and several forms of human performance (e.g. Holden, 1991; Multon et al., 1991; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Semadar, Robins & Ferris (2006); Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin & Jackson, (2008). However, this study recommends the LSE of the leaders in the Nigerian banking sector based on Anderson et al.'s (2008) taxonomy of LSE; among which are LSE for self-discipline, serve, project credibility, challenge and involve LSE.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Leadership self-efficacy**

Several studies have examined the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and effective leadership behavior and other organizational outcomes (McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopex-Forment, 2002; Onglatco, Yuen, Leong, & Lee, 1993; Paglis & Green, 2002; Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006; Robertson & Sadri, 1993; Wood & Bandura, 1989a; Jenkins, 1994 & Anderson et al., 2008). These researches, have in the past, highlighted the effectiveness of LSE in predicting leadership and organizational outcomes (Robertson & Sadri, 1993; Onglatco et al., 1993; Semadar et al., 2006; Hannah, 2006). Robertson and Sadri (1993) found that managerial efficacy relates to most performance criteria. In the same vein, Onglatco et al. (1993) they found that managerial efficacy significantly relates to perceived mobility, perceived success and earned salary. Furthermore, Chemers et al. (2000) found that LSE significantly correlated with the instructor ratings of leadership potential and effectiveness. Consequently, Murphy et al. (2003) found that the perceived leadership efficacy is positively related to ratings of the leaders' performance. Coincidentally, Semadar et al. (2006) found a weaker relationship between LSE

and managerial performance. Further, Hannah (2006) reported that overall leadership efficacy relates to senior officers' ratings of transformational leadership and performance.

The work of Paglis and Green (2002) also shows LSE to be related to change related outcomes. LSE significantly related to different ratings of effectiveness and employee engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Based on the result of Murphy and Ensher (1999), LSE shows a significant relationship with leaders' own ratings of leader-member exchange. Anderson et al (2008) conducted a study to measure the LSE- effective leadership relationship. The subsequent result shows that Self-Discipline LSE associated with Impartial Leadership. Challenge LSE was associated with exhibiting Creative and Strategic Leadership. The negative loading of Involve LSE in combination with a positive loading of Tenacious Leadership shows a negative relationship hence Convince LSE and Project Credibility LSE loaded positively whereas Serve LSE loaded negatively with influential leadership. The result further gave an impetus to the present study as recommended by Anderson et al (2008).

In the same vein, considering the emphasis on the studies above, Hannah, Avolio, Luthans and Harms (2008) observed that the concept of leadership efficacy is one area that has received relatively little attention, as limited studies or theory building contributions that link efficacy to leadership exist. Consequently however, Anderson et al., (2008) improved on the work of Paglis and Green (2002) as they argued that past studies have measured LSE as a latent construct; hence it did not have the capacity to be multidimensional. Their result produced 18 dimensions of LSE and nine taxonomies of effective leadership behavior based on multi-source measures. Their recorded some positive and negative relationship; hence, they recommended that future studies should be conducted based on their two taxonomies, as they recommended that the meaningful relations observed in their study provide an avenue for future studies.

## **2.2 Relational Leadership**

According to Gittell, and Douglass (2012), relational leadership builds on Follett's (1949) concept of reciprocal control, a form of control that is not coercive but rather "a coordinator of all functions, i.e., collective self-control". Thus, in order to achieve this form of leadership, it requires a kind of leadership that is distributed throughout the organisation rather than concentrated in few positions. The core characteristic of relational leadership is the embedding of authority into each role based on the knowledge associated with it (Gittell, and Douglass, 2012). One characteristic of relational leadership is leading through humble inquiry as described by Schein (2009) as a form of giving, seeking and receiving help that leaders can use to establish a culture of reciprocal learning throughout an organisation (Gittell, and Douglass, 2012).

Relational leadership (worker-manager), along with relational coordination (worker-worker) and relational co-production (worker-customer) are three processes of reciprocal interrelating that form the core of relational bureaucracy. Relational bureaucracy is a hybrid of the relational and bureaucratic forms in which reciprocal interrelating enables participants to respond to each other in knowledgeable and caring ways. While formal structures embed reciprocal interrelating into roles, thus enabling the scalability and sustainability typically associated with the bureaucratic form (Gittell & Douglass, 2012).

Foldy and Ospina (2012) posited that as the criticisms of traditional leadership theory and

research unfolded, it amplified and diversified a variety of new terms which in turn challenged the notion of leadership as a one-directional relationship between leader and follower. They argued that scholars have referred to leadership as shared, (Pearce & Conger, 2003) distributed, (Gronn, 2002) constructed, (Hosking, 2003) post-heroic (Drath, 2001) and relational (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006; Fletcher, 2004; Uhl-Bien, 2006) among other terms. In this sense, leadership is not something that the leader as one person possesses, but as much as it is something achieved in community and owned by the group (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006; Foldy et al, 2008; Foldy and Ospina, 2012).

Gittell, and Douglass (2012) defined relational leadership as “a process of role-based reciprocal interrelating” between workers and managers to negotiate the work that is to be done. Furthermore, Uhl-Bien (2006) defined relational leadership as “a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (e.g., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, and ideologies) are constructed and produced.” The two definitions show the different ways scholars look at relational leadership as the first definition implies that leadership is about how independent individuals inter-relate across different hierarchical positions, while the second views relational leadership as a jointly constructed but disembodied process not in individuals.

According to Comeche (2004), as reported in Lobato et al (2010), leaders who are relationship-oriented tend to increase the collaboration and the teamwork among their team members. In this sense, they succeed in achieving a better team climate as a consequence of the building and maintenance of the interpersonal relationships, as well as reducing unnecessary conflicts. Furthermore, leaders that tend to use this type of leadership style mostly obtain higher levels of motivation by offering positive interaction and creative collaboration.

Ancona, Backman & Parrot (2012) presented what they termed as “the D-leadership model”. They based their argument on the fact that Gittell and Douglass’ (2012) definition of relational leadership allows organisations to fuse the more focused, in-depth knowledge of workers with the broader, less focused knowledge of managers to create a more integrated, holistic understanding of the situation. Thus, their model differs in a number of important ways with the past models presented by researchers. Their model differed with others in two ways, i.e. they argued that leadership decisions arise not just from worker-manager interactions, but from worker-worker and worker-customer interactions as well. Secondly, relational model rests upon the assumption that managers and workers have very different knowledge bases as there exist a great deal of overlap in the knowledge base of workers and managers. Hence, they observed that in the D-leadership model, leadership behaviour emerges from the interaction of leaders, teams and contexts.

There are other leadership theories that are synonymous with relational leadership style, e.g. The LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991) and the distributive leadership. the Leadership Making model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1992; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1993) gives recognition to the increased proportions of the high quality relationships that were found in organisations by describing a kind of process for the accomplishment this through the use of dyadic partnership building (Graen & Uhl, 1995).

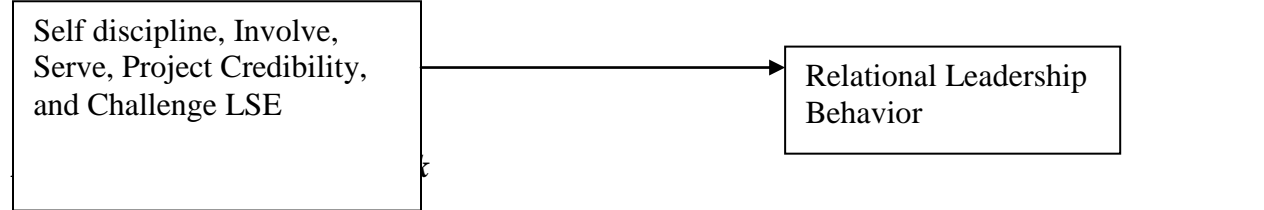
### 3. Research Framework

#### Independent variables

Self discipline, Involve, Serve, Project Credibility, and Challenge LSE

#### Dependent variables

Relational Leadership Behavior



### 4. Method

#### 4.1 Research Design

This study is a descriptive and correlation type of survey design. This type of design is considered suitable for collecting primary data. Descriptive type of studies are usually undertaken in organizations so as to learn about or describe characteristics of a group, i.e. age, level of education, job status or years of service (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009). It is also undertaken to understand the characteristics of organizations that follow common practice.

Correlational studies are conducted in order to identify important factors that are associated with the problems. Thus, the choice of this method solely depends on those research questions asked and how the said problem is defined (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009). It is conducted in a natural setting of organizations with the researcher having minimal room for interference, as it is done in a normal flow of work. Correlation studies conducted in an organization are called field studies (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009). This study is designed as a field study that is conducted by the researcher; hence the distribution of the face-to-face questionnaire was conducted by the researcher.

This study is also explanatory in nature as hypotheses were developed and tested. The work of Anderson et al. (2008) indicated that their study did not develop hypothesis due to the lack of past studies; hence, this study tested some hypotheses that were developed. Hypothesis testing is usually undertaken in order to explain the variance on the dependent variable or is intended to predict certain organizational outcomes (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009).

#### 4.2 Population and unit of analysis

A population of a study refers to the entire group of people chosen to be the focus of the study, events or things that are of interest to the researcher and which he wishes to investigate (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009). A population is a complete group of entities sharing some common set of characteristics (Zikmund, 2010). The population of this study comprises the branch managers of the 24 commercial banks in Nigeria with their 5118 branches that cut across the 36 states of the country, plus the nation's capital, Abuja. These 24 banks were selected to be the population of this study based on the Africa Report (2009) which shows the exact number of banks to be 24. There are a total number of 5,118 branches that are spread across the country owned by the 24 commercial banks in Nigeria hence this represents the population of this study. The branch managers in these banks serve as the leaders of those branches. Further, the unit of analysis of this study is individual.

### **4.3 The Research Sample and Technique**

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a smaller number of some items or some part of a larger population in order to make conclusions about the whole of this population (Zikmund, 2010). A sample is a subject that represents populations as it comprises some members who are selected from the population; thus' it is a group that represents the population under study (Sekaran & Baugie, 2009). This study uses the probability sampling technique. According to Sekaran (2003), probability sampling gives each respondent equal chance of being chosen as a sample. For this purpose, stratified sampling was adopted. Haunt and Tyrrell (2004) stated that in a stratified sample, the sampling frame is divided into non-overlapping groups or strata. A sample is drawn from each stratum which would give a clearer representation leaving no stone unturned. This study used probability sampling and other form of sampling i.e. non-probability sampling in other as to give equal opportunity for each member of the population to be chosen. The disadvantages that have to do with non-probability sampling i.e., the population may not have the opportunity to be chosen hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the entire population (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009)

### **4.4 Measures**

In order for concepts to be measured, it had to be made operational; operational definition gives meaning by giving specific activity or operation that is necessary to measure (Zikmund, 2010). Anderson et al. (2008), Blake and Mouton (1982), Fleishman (1975), Bass (1990).

#### **4.4.1 Self-Discipline LSE**

Self-Discipline self-efficacy in this study is operationalised as efficacious managers believe in their ability to demonstrate emotional maturity and perseverance in the exercise of business. Leaders with Self-Discipline LSE hence believe in their ability to maintain composure and stability across a wide range of business situations. They are able to control their personal behavior in the workplace and always try to promote discipline

#### **4.4.2 Involve LSE**

In this study, involve LSE is operationalised as self-efficacious managers with the ability to interact with co-workers and subordinates in ways that respect their views and ideas. They are participative in nature and distributive of authority. Managers high in involve LSE hence are individuals who believe in their ability to authorize others to assume work responsibilities; they bring to the attention of others relevant information, involve subordinates in the business decision-making and consider different perspectives about people, business issues, or problems.

#### **4.4.3 Serve LSE**

Serve LSE is operationalised as managers having belief in their ability to set aside ego and pretence for the greater good of the organization. Hence, leaders who have the efficacy to serve put the larger interests of the organization ahead of personal needs; they admit errors and share credit. They behave adaptively as circumstances at work evolve and at the same time, are the types of people that appreciate the value in human differences.

#### **4.4.4 Challenge LSE**

Challenge LSE is operationalised in this study as managers high in efficacious ability to set and realize tough performance standards. Managers who are high in challenge LSE believe in their

ability to establish specific, challenging, and attainable performance targets by setting higher standards of performance. They are good in getting results by realizing business objectives and always assess progress toward goals and objectives.

#### **4.4.5 Project Credibility LSE**

Project credibility LSE in this study is operationalised as managers high in efficacy believe in their ability to be fair and just and also to appear honest and believable to others. Hence manager's ability to be efficacious in project credibility will normally act consistently and in accordance with principles, values, and business ethics of the organization. They create positive first impression through demeanor and appearance and act in a way that fosters trust by following through on commitments.

#### **4.4.6 Relational Leadership Behavior**

According to Anderson et al., (2008), managers who display effective relational leadership behavior are thus regarded as being effective interpersonally. This type of leadership had been found in previous leadership studies i.e. person-oriented leadership of Blake and Mouton (1982), consideration by Fleishman (1975) and individualized consideration by Bass (1990). One characteristic of relational leadership is leading through humble inquiry. As described by Schein (2009), it is a form of giving, seeking and receiving help that leaders can use to establish a culture of reciprocal learning throughout an organization (Gittell & Douglass, 2012). In this study, relational leadership is operationalised as effectiveness which is wholly characterized by focus on the interpersonal process in interacting with others (Anderson et al., 2008). In sum, relational leaders exhibit their personal concern for the well-being of others, take their time to let others understand and observe they have done a good job, are readily approachable, converse with co-workers and cultivate a sense of teamwork, cohesion and inclusiveness.

#### **4.5 Questionnaire administration**

In this study, a quantitative method of data collection was adopted with the use of questionnaire which was adapted from past studies. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents face-to-face. A total of 1000 sets of questionnaires (subordinate and self-rated) were distributed to a sample of the branch managers and their subordinates in the 24 commercial banks. It has a total population of 5118 bank branches. Out of the total questionnaires sent, 457 questionnaires were returned of which 434 questionnaires were considered suitable to be included in the analysis. About 23 questionnaires were in one way or the other considered not suitable to be included in the analysis as a result of many missing values and some were completed half way.

#### **4.6 Data analysis**

The data were inserted into SPSS for Windows version 16. The analysis was started by first checking the possibility of missing values. The first test conducted was the checking for possible outliers among the responses. In this case, 21 outliers were found and deleted from the analysis. This left the analysis with 413 cases to be considered for analysis. Exploratory PCA was utilized to see the factorial validity of the measures. In the same vein, the reliability test of the measures was also conducted in order to see the internal consistency of the measures by computing the Cronbach Alpha. The hypotheses of the study were tested using the multiple and linear regressions.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Factor Analysis on Leadership Self-efficacy (LSE)

In testing the validity of the items that measure leadership efficacy, an exploratory factor analysis was done on the 24 items that measured the overall variable. This variable has five dimensions and was measured by self-discipline LSE with four items, involve LSE with five items, serve LSE with five items, project credibility LSE with five items and challenge LSE also with five items. This makes overall items that measure LSE (independent variable) to be 24 items in total. The PCA with orthogonal varimax rotation was conducted so as to determine those factors that were appropriate for each dimension i.e. those items that belong together. Going by the result, four items had to be deleted after various tests. These items were found to have either low factor loadings of below .50., low MSA value or low communalities value, hence one item had to be deleted each among four dimensions i.e. self-discipline LSE, serve LSE, involve LSE, and challenge LSE. Only project credibility LSE was found to have had all its five items to have a factor loading of above .50. The result presented a five factor solution with eigenvalues that is greater than 1.0 as the rotated matrix shows that all the items did not cross load, hence it gave the appropriate items that belongs to the same group of measures. This result therefore shows that LSE was measured with 20 items in all. The result is presented at the table.

The next factor analysis is relational leadership behavior. The factor measures the respondents' perception on their ability to display a sense of belonging and being effective interpersonally. They are person-oriented with a sense of consideration. They are characterized by focus on interpersonal process in interacting with others. Initially it had seven items that measure it but the factor analysis rotated matrix reduced the items to five measures. The factor has an Eigen value of 2.793 and contributes 21.488% of the total variance in the data.

### 5.2 Reliability Test

After the factor analysis, the next analysis was the reliability test based on the dimensions and the construct under study. The reliability of each of the dimensions was tested to find the Cronbach alpha value of the factors. Hair et al. (2010) posited that a lower limit of Cronbach Alpha value can reduce to .60 and is considered acceptable and reliable for exploratory research. The overall Cronbach Alpha value of LSE is above the required range. The dimensions of the independent variable show that self-discipline LSE has a value (.76), involve (.73), serve (.78), project credibility (.81) and challenge LSE (.78) and the overall LSE shows a reliability of (.64). This shows that the Cronbach Alpha value ranges within .64 to .81. These values have met the required minimum value needed as suggested by scholars (Nunally, 1978; Flynn, Schroeder, & Sakakibara, 1994; Hair et al., 2010). It was also found that the overall Cronbach Alpha value of relational leadership behavior is at (.85) this also meets the required Cronbach Alpha value as suggested by scholars (Nunally, 1978; Flynn, et al., 1994; Hair et al., 2010).

### 5.3 Regression analysis

The regression analysis of LSE and relational leadership behavior was conducted. This regression was done in other to test the hypothesis of the study; *whether all the dimensions of leadership self-efficacy influence relational leadership behavior*, thus the dependent variable is regressed on the dimensions of the independent variable. The result shows that LSE explains 32.8% of the model ( $R^2 = .328$ , F-Change= 39.804,  $p < .01$ ). This analysis result shows that only one of the dimensions contributes to the influencing of relational leadership. Serve LSE has a



beta value of  $\beta = .553$ ,  $p < .01$  which shows that it is the only dimension that influences relational leadership behavior. Other dimensions such as self-discipline LSE, involve LSE, challenge and project credibility LSE do not influence or contribute to relational leadership behavior. It is therefore ascertained that hypothesis on serve LSE is accepted and other hypotheses are rejected.

## **6. Discussions**

This result of this study shows that it is in concord with McCormick et al. (2002), Chan and Drasgow (2001) and Hendricks and Payne (2007) on individuals' attempts/motivation to lead and Anderson et al (2008). Murphy and Ensher (1999) found that LSE relates to leaders' own ratings of leader-member exchange. The result of Kane et al. (2002) shows that LSE related significantly to leader goal level, leader strategies and functional leadership behaviors. Subsequently, Paglis and Green (2002) found support for leader behaviors of setting a direction, gaining commitment to change goals and overcoming obstacles to change. Further, in this study, it was found that managers high in serve LSE relates to their relational leadership behavior. Logically it can be concluded that managers that tend to be efficacious in serve LSE are relational in their behavior towards the stakeholders in the organizations.

Consequently however, most of the dimensions of LSE were not significantly related to their corresponding relational leadership behavior. This can be explained by the nature of the result of Anderson et al. (2008). For example, in this study, serve LSE was found to be significantly related to relational leadership, and challenge LSE is significantly related to effective communication behavior. Furthermore, project credibility was found to have been significantly related to both directive leadership style and relational leadership style. This result however contradicts the findings of Anderson et al. (2008) as most of the significant relationship recorded in this study is not in concord with their result. In the same vein, this can be explained by the approach of the two studies conducted. Anderson et al. (2008) used a sample from a single institution i.e. drawn from international financial services company, thus it may likely be due the fact that this study uses a sample that cuts across different banks. Another possibility is that, both this study and that of Anderson et al. (2008) uses the financial services sector, hence it may likely be due to the use of a single sector.

### **6.1 Limitation and Direction for Future Research**

This study is not without some limitations or shortcomings. The first limitation of this study is that although there are a lot of variables that can be considered to measure LSE and leadership behavior, this study is limited to some of the dimensions of the Anderson et al. (2008) taxonomy of LSE and effective leadership behavior. Secondly, the data collection of this study is limited to within three months; hence it can be considered a relatively short period. To overcome some of the limitations of this research, this study recommends that future studies should consider other dimensions of the Anderson et al. (2008) LSE and effective leadership taxonomies at the same time, the possibility of introducing a mediator or moderator variable. This study recommends also, that future researchers should consider longitudinal study in order to have enough time for data collection.

## **7. Conclusions**

The research objectives of this study were to examine LSE and relational leadership behavior association, hence it was found that only serve LSE was also found to be significant. Based on

the foregoing findings, it can be concluded that the leadership self-efficacy significantly influence relational leadership behavior through serve LSE. As such, it was found that those managers under study consider serve LSE in relation to their being relational in approach. Thus it is concluded that managers high in serve LSE are found to be relational in orientation in the commercial banks.

Additionally, the conceptual model of this research was designed based on the extant relevant literature reviewed. This covers the variables considered in this study i.e. leadership self-efficacy and relational leadership behavior. This is arrived at based on the recommendations for future research to conduct a study on the said objectives highlighted above. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the research questions and the objectives of this study were answered. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the conceptual model is in line with the underpinning theory (self-efficacy theory) used to explain the framework of this study. Hence the empirical findings justify the underpinning theory employed.

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