

## Does Emotional Intelligence, Moderate Leadership-Commitment nexus in Organizations? Evidence from the Banking Sector in Ethiopia

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to investigate the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment and the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the Ethiopian banking sector. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted for this study. Quantitative research methods were used to collect data from 312 non-managerial bank employees who participated in this study. A multistage stratified random sampling method was used to determine the samples. SPSS version 20, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were performed to analyze the data. The results show that both transformational and transactional leadership styles are positively correlated with organizational commitment. However, the results showed that emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. This study contributes to understanding the mechanisms of developing organizational commitment through leadership styles. The study, therefore, recommends that bank leaders focus on leadership styles combined with transformational and transactional leadership styles that have a greater impact on organizational commitment in Ethiopian banking. The study recommends that bank industries should actively focus on their recruitment and training policies. This study also provides an opportunity to expand the research to other financial sectors.*

**Keywords:** 1. Transformational Leadership, 2. Transactional Leadership, 3. Emotional Intelligence, 4. Organizational Commitment

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### 1. Introduction

In the current competitive environment, leadership and commitment are being recognized as “the key assets of high-performance organizations” (Yozgat et al., 2013 cited in Silva et al., 2019). To remain competitive and withstand competitive pressures, maintaining and increasing organizational commitment is one way to improve organizational performance in a company or industry (Roy et al., 2020; Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Riyanto et al., 2017). Companies from all walks of life innovate and strive to survive competitive pressures, including financial institutions, banks, and non-bank financial institutions (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020; Le et al., 2020). To be competent in these pressures, employee commitment is crucial. As cited by Teshome (2013), researchers indicate that the commitment of employees (Brockner et al., 1992; Meyer et al., 2004; Allen and Meyer, 1990) and leadership style (Bass, 1997; Bass et al., 2003; Trottier et al., 2008) are the major factors affecting the success or failure of an organization.

Leadership can be defined as “the relationship between an individual and a group built around some mutual interest wherein the group behaves in a manner directed or determined by the leader” (Rehman et al., 2012). Leaders who are able to innovate in an era of disruption can become successful disruptive digital leaders (Kumbure et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, leadership may play a key role in developing organizational commitment.

Allen and Myer (1990) also argue that employee commitment can result in the effectiveness of leadership, employee performance improvements, reduced turnover, and absenteeism if properly managed. Many organizations understand the value of enhancing employees’ commitment and the importance of understanding its antecedents that employees are committed to those jobs where they are happiest. People who are jovial at the workplace find their occupation more meaningful and more interesting; they are more in tune with the purpose of their organization, they feel more attractive feeling (Lantos and Craton, 2012), and Job satisfaction and some of its facets are found as significant predictors of organizational commitment (Boles et al., 2007).

Human resource is one of the most important assets of an organization which increases the efficiency and the effectiveness of the organization; also, it acts as a pure source of a competitive advantage that is inimitable (Beheshtifar and Herat, 2013). When employees have a high commitment to their job, they have less intention to leave the company and show a positive attitude to the company (as cited in Ahmad, Javed, Iqbal&Hamad, 2014).

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Worldwide, the banking sector plays an important role in the economy of a country (Abusharbeh, 2017). However, the bank industry is the industry facing a higher turnover rate compares to other industries, due to the higher workload in this area (Hussain, Yunus& et al., 2013). Therefore, this sector needs professional leaders who can achieve all the goals of both employees and organizations. An organization that is short of capital may have the option to borrow money, and one in a poor location has the option to move. However, an organization short of leadership has little chance for survival (Yousef, 1998).

The relationship between a manager's leadership style and employee organizational commitment has been a subject of controversy by many researchers (Mclaggan, 2013). The controversy has been centered on whether or not the style of leadership of managers influences the level of organizational commitment dimensions (Aghashahi, et al. 2013).

Many previous studies (Saquer, 2009; Temesgen, 2011; Mclaggan, 2013; Ahmadi et al., 2010; Clinebell et al., 2013; Aghashahi et al., 2013 &Mester et al., 2003) have suggested a positive relationship between transformational leadership styles and employee affective commitment. The aforementioned researchers (Clinebell et al., 2013; Temesgen, 2011 &Ahmadi et al., 2010) have found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and continuance commitment. But other researchers (Saquer, 2009 &Aghashahi et al., 2013) have recommended that there is no relationship between transformational leadership style and continuance commitment.

Some others (Saquer, 2009; Ahmadi et al., 2010; Clinebell et al., 2013; Aghashahi et al., 2013 &Mester et al., 2003) also agreed with a positive relationship between transformational leadership and normative commitment. However, Temesgen (2011) also find out that transformational leadership has no relation to normative commitment. Similar controversy has been raised on the relationship between transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership with the affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions. Studies have shown a positive correlation between transactional leadership style and affective and continuance commitment (Saquer, 2009; Ahmadi et al., 2010; Clinebell et al., 2013; &Mester et al., 2003). Although Temesgen (2011), recommended that transactional leadership has no significant correlation

with affective and continuance commitment rather transactional leadership has a significant and positive relation with normative commitment.

Therefore, leaders must possess a special ability to diagnose the organizational environment, accurately identify the contingent factors and subsequently make a sound decision in leading the organization towards success. Here, emotional intelligence ability offers great help to guide a leader in choosing the right leadership style.

Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities to accurately assess the emotions of self and others, regulate the emotions to achieve the desired state, and use the emotions towards achieving the expected performance (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence has been defined differently by different authors but the objective of having this intelligence is similar; to achieve the desired emotional state so that the employees are able to attain their expected performance. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are able to correctly scan the organizational environment, weigh the possible consequences of their actions and select the most appropriate leadership styles, acceptable to their followers.

Leadership is not the same in every culture (Bhagat & Steers, 2009) and leadership styles may differ according to the context. Hence, there is an acute need to study this concept in the Ethiopian context to examine the universality of the Full Range Leadership model. Further, it will help the banking leadership to know how their subordinates perceive their leadership styles and how it impacts how they perform. It can help them change their leadership styles to achieve higher goals.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Given this backdrop, the primary research questions in this study are as follows: 1: Is there a significant relationship between leadership styles of leaders and the organizational commitment of employees? 2: Which among the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant) is the best predictor of organizational commitment? 3: Is emotional intelligence a significant moderator in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment?

Regarding the issues brought out in the problem statement, the purpose of this study is to refer to the full range of leadership theory of Bass (1985, 1990), this study aims to fill the gap in the literature in two ways: The first is to explore the relationship between the leadership style of banking managers and employees' organizational commitment; the second is to examine the development mechanism of organizational commitment through emotional intelligence methods.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

More specifically, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

Determining the relationship between leadership styles of managers and the organizational commitment of the employees in banks, examining the relationship between transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership styles of managers and the organizational commitment of the employees in banks, and exploring whether emotional intelligence is a significant moderator variable in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment.

## **1.4 Contribution of the study**

The study is expected to contribute to different bodies in many ways. The findings of this study will add to the wealth of knowledge in other leadership and organizational commitment studies. It could also be helpful for individuals who want to conduct further studies on related topics and other organizations that face similar problems.

Inevitably, this study will contribute to the growing body of research on the impacts of leadership styles on an organizational commitment by examining the three important leadership styles and their impact on organizational commitment. It is believed that this study will add value to the kinds of literature on

supervisors' leadership styles, especially in the Ethiopian settings, since there were limited works of literature done in similar settings. The results of the study will also help bank sectors to practice leadership styles that will develop organizational commitment, and will also contribute a lot to anyone who is interested in providing information on the relationship between leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and organizational commitment.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### **2.1 Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment**

Most research on leadership has recognized the multiple leadership styles that leaders employ in managing organizations (Yukl, 2013, Sudha, Shahnawaz&Farhat, 2016; Kelly & MacDonald, 2016). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership styles have been categorized as the most commonly adopted styles used in organizational leadership studies (Rukmani, Ramesh & Jayakrishnan, 2010; Rehman, Shareef, Mahmood & Ishaque, 2012; Salau, Oludayo, Falola, Olokundun, Ibidunni & Atolagbe, 2018). Based on these findings, a first hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment.

### **2.2 Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment**

Transformational leadership extends value-based leadership to accomplish more subordinate execution (Chaturvedi et al., 2019) but achieve this expansion by using different motivational techniques (Organ & Lingl, 1995). Organ (2006) found that subordinates' hierarchical duty was decidedly related to the transformational leadership practices of their managers. Studies by Nunnally et al (2014); Crawford (2014) and Pradhan and Pradhan (2016) have identified significant associations between transformational leadership and dimensions of organizational commitment. Based on these findings, a second hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

### **2.3 Transactional Leadership and Organizational Commitment**

To achieve employee performance, transactional leaders evaluate the extent of task completion and compliance. This response serves as the basis for organizational reward and punishment. Thus, the rewards are contingent on subordinates' completion of roles and assignments as defined by the leader (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 2013). Related studies (Cheung and Wong, 2011; Lam and O'Higgins, 2012; Popli and Rizvi, 2016) have indicated that the use of transactional leadership promotes employee commitment. Based on these findings, a third hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and organizational commitment.

### **2.4 Passive Avoidant Leadership and Organizational Commitment**

There are empirical studies answering the positive effects of laissez-faire leadership styles on employee commitment (e.g., Pahi, Hamid, Umrani, and Ahmed, 2015; Garg and Ramjee, 2013; Alqudah, 2011; Pahi, Shaikh, Abbasi, and Hamid, 2018). Based on these findings, a fourth hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant relationship between passive avoidant leadership and organizational commitment.

### **2.5 The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence between Leadership Styles and Organizational Commitment**

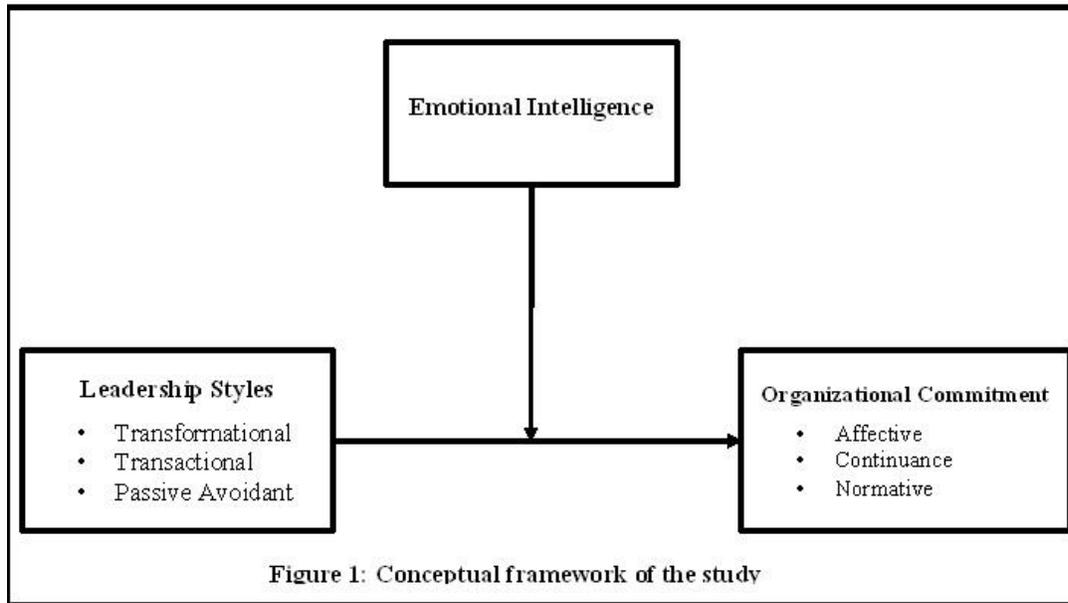
The strength and form of the relationship between two variables may depend on the value of the moderator variable, which changes the form or strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Hayes A. F, 2016).

Previous research by (Farahani, Taghadosi, and Behboudi, 2011; Khan et al., 2014; and Saleem, Batool, and Khattak, 2017) suggests that emotional intelligence outcomes moderate the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment.

Based on these findings, a fifth hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment.

Furthermore, in light of the insights gained from the review of the literature discussed, the following conceptual framework has been developed for the present study (See Figure 1).



Source: Hayes & Montoya (2017)

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study**

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design and employed a positivist approach. Conventionally, this approach uses structured questionnaires (Shukla, 2014).

Therefore, this study employed structured questionnaires; that is, these instruments have become one of the most widely used data collection methods (Quinlan 2011). Questionnaires are a popular method of collecting raw data and thus can be used in all types of quantitative research (McNabb 2013; Saunders et al. 2019).

#### 3.2 Population, Sample Size, and Method

The sample respondents in the study were drawn from a total of 1420 employees working in the Ethiopian banking sector located in the Bahirdar, Gondar, and Dessie regions in the Amhara region, as they were representative of the general population. Using Yamane's formula (1967), the sample size was determined. 310 respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique using a sampling error technique with a 95% confidence level and 5% probability.

This study uses a multi-stage stratified sampling technique to select banks, bank branches, and subordinate institutions. The 310 respondents were selected from the three district branches by using proportionate

stratified random sampling. Proportional stratified random sampling is widely used to ensure equal representation of the population in the sample.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, the researcher used quantitative techniques. These techniques include descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The analysis was done by using SPSS Software. Inferential statistics were also used to make valid conclusions from the data.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Correlation and Regression Analysis

**Table 1: Correlation between Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment**

		OC	LS
OC	Pearson Correlation	1	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	310	310
LS	Pearson Correlation	.514**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	310	310

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

According to the findings, leadership style and organizational commitment are positively correlated. All are significant at the 99% confidence level. The Pearson correlation between organizational commitment and leadership style is  $r=0.514$  at  $p < 0.01$ .

#### 4.1.1 Regression Analysis between Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment

The regression results are presented in the form of model summaries, regression, analysis of variance, and regression coefficients.

##### 4.1.1.1 Regression Model Summary

The model summary results presented in Table 2 indicate that leadership style explained 26% of organizational commitments of employees in public and private banks in Ethiopia ( $R^2 = 0.264$ ).

**Table 2: Model Summary of Leadership Style on Organizational Commitment**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.514 <sup>a</sup>	.264	.262	12.722	.264	110.657	1	308	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), LS

**4.1.1.2 Regression ANOVA**

Regression ANOVA shows that leadership style has a significant effect on organizational commitment  $F(1, 17908.430) = 110.657, p < .05$ , as shown in Table 3. This means that the constructed regression model is suitable for predicting the outcome variable on how leadership style affects the organizational commitment of Ethiopian public and private bank employees.

**Table 3: Regression ANOVA of Leadership Style on Organizational Commitment**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regress.	17908.430	1	17908.430	110.657	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	49845.841	308	161.837		
	Total	67754.271	309			

a. Dependent Variable: OC

b. Predictors: (Constant), LS

**4.5.1.3 Regression Coefficient**

The regression coefficients are shown in Table 4. In the regression coefficient model, the analysis showed that leadership style statistically predicted organizational commitment ( $\beta = .350, (5.232) t = 10.519, p < .05$ ). Beta weights, which measure the importance of explanatory variables in the model, are positive for leadership style, with a beta of 0.350, statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . This means that an increase in leadership style units increases the Organizational Commitment unit by 0.350.

**Table 4: Coefficients of Leadership Style on Organizational Commitment**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Constant	19.805	3.785		5.232	.000
	LS	.350	.033	.514	10.519	.000

a. Dependent Variable: OC

From the coefficient table, the values of the regression model were derived:

The general form of the regression model used to be:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_i + E$$

$\beta_0$  = Constant;  $\beta_i$  = leadership style and E = Error term.

From the coefficient table, leadership style influences organizational commitment among employees in banks in Ethiopia.

$$Y = 19.805 + .350X + .033$$

Results showed that leadership style explained 26% of organizational commitment ( $R^2 = .264, F(1, 17908.430) = 110.657, p < .05$ ), while the remaining 74% of organizational commitment was explained by other factors. Furthermore, leadership style significantly predicted organizational commitment ( $\beta = .350, (5.232) t = 10.519, p < .05$ ). This addresses research question 1: Is there a significant relationship between a leader's leadership style and employees' organizational commitment?

**4.1.2 Correlation between Dimensions of LS of Managers and OC**

The correlation between the three dimensions of managerial leadership style (transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant) and the organizational commitment of banking employees are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Correlation b/n the Three Dimensions of LS & OC**

		OC	TF	TS	PA
OC	Pearson Correlation	1	.502**	.511**	-.164**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.004
	N	310	310	310	310
TF	Pearson Correlation	.502**	1	.832**	-.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	310	310	310	310
TS	Pearson Correlation	.511**	.832**	1	-.283**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	310	310	310	310
PA	Pearson Correlation	-.164**	-.457**	-.283**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.000	
	N	310	310	310	310

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

The Pearson correlation between organizational commitment and transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership is  $r = 0.502$ ,  $r = 0.511$  and  $r = -0.164$  respectively at  $p < 0.01$ . These values show that there is a positive and significant relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and organizational commitment, and a negative significant relationship between passive-avoidant leadership style and organizational commitment. This response means that a leader who practices transformational or transactional leadership styles will be able to increase the level of commitment of employees towards their organization. Transformational and transactional leadership, the result shows that increasing the level of organizational commitment of employees. On the other hand, a passive-avoidant type of leadership tends not to increase the level of commitment of employees to their banks.

**4.1.2.1 Regression Analysis between LS and OC**

Table 6 shows the regression results between transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership and organizational commitment.

**Table 6: Summary of regression analysis b/n TF, TS & PA on OC**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	24.780	4.223		5.868			.000
	TF	.234	.079	.284	2.953	0.249	103.605	.003

	TS	.629	.195	.288	3.235	0.259	108.730	.001
	PA	.090	.105	.048	.862	0.024	8.461	.389

a. Dependent Variable: OC

From the above results, it can be seen that leaders with transactional leadership styles have a greater impact on the organizational commitment of their employees than leaders with transformational leadership styles, but the difference is not significant. However, passive-avoidant leadership styles do have, not to impact on the organizational commitment of their employees. Therefore, based on the results obtained from the correlation and regression analysis, it can be concluded that transactional and transformational leadership are the best predictors of organizational commitment. This addresses research question 2: Which of the leadership styles (transformative, transactional, and passive-avoidant) is the best predictor of organizational commitment?

### 4.1.3 Moderating Analysis

**Table 7: The Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence**

**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	Df2	P
.5198	.2702	161.5837	37.7713	3.0000	306.0000	.0000

**Model**

	Coeff	se	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	58.9266	.8741	67.4133	.0000	57.2066	60.6466
LS	.2823	.0545	5.1787	.0000	.1751	.3896
EI	.0577	.0378	1.5268	.1278	-.0167	.1320
Int_1	-.0001	.0009	-.0737	.9413	-.0018	.0017

Table 7 shows that the results of the moderation analysis, i.e. the interaction term was not statistically significant, B = -0.0001, 95%CI [-0.0018, 0.0017], T = -0.0737, p>0.05, indicating that the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment is not conditional on the level of emotional intelligence. Therefore, the current study indicates that emotional intelligence does not moderate the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted by (Afzal, M. & Afzal, M., 2019; Mahdinezhad, M., Yusof, H. & Rambeli, N., 2019 and Nordin, N., 2012).

This addresses Research question 3: Is emotional intelligence an important moderator of the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment?

### 5. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment and the moderating role of emotional intelligence in Ethiopian banking. This study provides theoretical and practical implications for the body of knowledge on the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment.

One of the major implications of this study is that it can help banks in the public and private sectors better understand the factors that affect employees' organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is required for the sustained development of banking industries. This is to ensure that their businesses continue to grow and help to support the development of the Ethiopian economy.

Inevitably, it contributes to the growing body of research on leadership and organizational commitment. It expands the understanding of the crucial role of leadership in developing an organizational commitment. It contributes to the debate about the impact of leadership styles on organizational commitment by revealing

how transactional leadership can develop the organizational commitment of employees through the quality of relations between leaders and their followers.

Furthermore, many authors have suggested that more attention should be paid to understanding the mechanisms by which transformational leadership influences organizational commitment (Keskes et al., 2018). Surprisingly, the results showed that emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and organizational commitment in banking.

There are several significant contributions of this study of the industry practitioners. First, there is a significant relationship between the leadership styles of the managers and the organizational commitment of the employees. Second, emotional intelligence doesn't moderate the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment in the banking industry. This finding is significant because, to the researcher's knowledge, there have been no similar findings in previous research in the service sector bank industry in Ethiopia.

The results of this study suggest that managers exhibiting the right leadership style can increase employees' organizational commitment. This finding is important since banking industries are the backbone of the country's economy and knowledge of factors that can contribute to the retention of employees and the success of the company will be beneficial.

In the context of the Ethiopian banking industry, to improve the leadership styles of the managers for transformational and transactional leadership, the banking industries should focus on the development of both transformational and transactional leadership styles through appropriate recruitment and HR development programs.

Based on the findings, the researchers forward the following: This study was conducted in the Ethiopian banking sector located in Amhara State. There is an opportunity to replicate this study in other states as well. The main focus of this study is only on public and private banks; therefore, similar studies could be conducted in other sectors under the financial sector, such as insurance or microfinance institutions.

In the current study, the employees rated their immediate managers' leadership styles and level of emotional intelligence. Managers and top management (CEO or managing directors) play an important and important role in enhancing employees' commitment to the organization. Future studies should cover the top management. It is very important for the employees to rate their top management on their leadership styles and level of emotional intelligence and how it affects the employees' commitment to the organization.

Bank leaders in Ethiopia are recommended to demonstrate a combination of transformational and transactional leadership behaviors based on current work environment conditions. The leaders of banks should focus on playing a role model by taking the first step of what they talk about and keeping consistent in their actions in ways that get trust and loyalty from employees and instilling confidence, commitment, and vision in employees. In this way, leaders can get an employee's work commitments or improvement in their performance by assuring the psychological attachment of employees to the organization. They should encourage participation in decision-making, allow enough room for employees to speak and delegate, and make them feel fully responsible.

To cope with ongoing and upcoming changes in the banking environment, the leaders in banks should have a quite predictable ability and prepare in advance by giving more focus to research and development, making the working environment suit for creativity and innovation, and appreciating and entertaining different ideas arise from individual or group of employees. On the other hand, when employees are unfamiliar with the work at hand, bank leaders should pay attention to close guidance and close follow-up or supervision of employees. Additionally, leaders must clearly communicate employee expectations, awards, and recognition to help improve employee performance and the company as a whole.

Stakeholders in the industry should consider shifting banking in a non-traditional direction with a greater emphasis on understanding leadership styles and their impact on improved outcomes. Leadership styles can be learned, and bank stakeholders should consider the need for leadership style training for leaders as a

means of increasing organizational commitment and performance outcomes. The stakeholders might also consider holding national conferences on innovative leadership models used to support the vision of the banking industry and seminars might be warranted to show financial leaders how to apply leadership models to everyday activities and develop strategies that might go with the modern banking environment.

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