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# The Effect of Aggressive Managerial Humor Practices on Employees' Commitment of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria

**EVWIERHURHOMA, Ejiroghene Daniel and OGA, Kelechi Charles**

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences,  
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between aggressive humor practices and employee commitment (affective, continuance and normative commitment) of deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted using questionnaire as the research instrument which was distributed to 285 employees of deposit money banks in Rivers State. The generated data were analyzed through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with t-statistics so as to test the relationship between the variables of the study through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 within a significance level of 0.05. The findings showed a significant and negative relationship between aggressive humor practices and affective commitment and normative commitment respectively, however a positive and significant relationship existed with continuance commitment of deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria, hence we recommended that managers in the DMBs in Rivers State should try as much as possible to avoid the use of aggressive humor practices as it can cause emotional harm to the employees, results to employee harassment which can affect the commitment of affected employees as well as others as a result reduce productivity and induce employee turnover in the organization.*

**Keywords:** *Humor Practices; Aggressive Humor, Managers, Employee Commitment*

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## INTRODUCTION

The environment business organization operates in has over the years changed dramatically as a result of changes in technology and increased globalization which have brought a distinctive and new ways of doing business compare to organizations of the past, say fifty years ago. Hence, many organizations generally and managers specifically have come to the realization that the only way to survive in this turbulent and uncertain business environment is to effectively and efficiently manage their employees as well as ensure their commitment (Varsha & Monica, 2012). More so, the need to achieve more output with less input has become one of the major challenges facing organization of this day which organizations need not just staff but committed ones to deliver more immediately in order have higher output. Employees with low commitment will be carried away by their personal success at the detriment of the organization they work with. Thus, managers must ensure that employees' commitment are sustained and enhanced so as stated organization's objectives and goal(s) can be achieved; this is because, the human resources in the organization play enormous role in ensuring the effective attainment of set goal(s) or objectives.

Lack of employee commitment can affect the performance as well as the success of the organization negatively and there are many signs managers must look for to determine lack of employee commitment in the organization such as lack of interest to assigned task; employees

who do not show interest in their work will express their discontent through their relationships with customers. When employees no longer care, they will not be willing to fulfill or exceed customer service expectations. There may be more product returns, diminished quality control, increased defects and processing errors that will have a direct impact on sales and customer attitudes towards the organization when employees are not committed to an organization. This has led to lots of complains over the years from customers of how they have been treated by organizations including the Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) across the globe especially in developing countries like Nigeria. More so, absence of synergy among employees can also be a good indicator of lack of employee commitment in the organization which is a pointer to lack of team spirit in the organization. Also, lack of employee commitment can occur when the organization's climate is not more exciting and appealing to the employees; when employees are unwilling to express ideas or commit themselves to taking risks and accepting new challenges. In this situation managers must adopt effective strategy that will ensure that the organization's climate is exciting, lively and attracting through the adoption of humor practices.

In spite of the certainty that business organization should be taken seriously, humor can ease the disposition or tension of individuals within organizational environments and bring about a more pleasant and pleasurable working environment. Humor is an entertaining way of communicating that result in laughter and positive feeling (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Managerial humor practices is very important to the commitment of employees in any organization due to the fact that an employee that is excited who works in a conducive environment will be likely to be more committed to the organization. Having a good knowledge of humor practices can have strong effect on employees' management especially in regards to their commitment in the organization since organizations are primarily galvanized by the principles of interaction (Kuiper & McHale, 2009). However, there are various ways in which managers can practice or apply humor in the organization such as self-enhancing humor practices, affiliative humor practices, self-defeating humor practices and aggressive humor practices which have different effects (such as positive and negative) on employees reactions and behaviour (Kuiper & McHale, 2009; Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2015); thus, the appropriate application of managerial humor can bring about inestimable benefits in the organization and serves as important tools for managers in motivating employees and communicating messages efficiently and effectively that can enhance employee commitment. Hence, the purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between aggressive humor practices and employee commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objective of the study is to determine the relationship between aggressive humor practices and affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment respectively of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is expected that the outcome of this study would be relevant and useful to organization in Nigeria and the world at large for both current and prospect organizations especially DMBs in Rivers State. It would also help organizations in the aspect of decision making on how to determine the relationship between aggressive humor practices and employee commitment. Assist these organizations become more responsive to the significance of applying aggressive humor practices and how these organizations can effectively and efficiently manage these determinants in other to increase their employee commitment, performance and long term success.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this research work are stated as follows:

- i. What is the relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and affective commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and continuance commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and normative commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses are stated in the null form and they are as follows:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and affective commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and continuance commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and normative commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The fundamental theory covering this study is superiority theory and it states that those who adopts or uses disapproving or aggressive humor practices uses it to raise themselves above others which makes other inferior. It is instigated and enjoyed by those who are dominant or wish to be (Cruthirds, Wang & Romero, 2013). Hence, it is often adopted to show superiority over others (employees) which can result to victimization, belittlement, and brings misfortune to others as a result might affects their commitment negatively.

### **Concept of Aggressive Humor Practices**

An aggressive humor practice is a dimension of humor practices and humor has to do with amusing communications that result in positive feeling and cognitions (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). In other words, humor practices involve communications or messages which have the ability to invoke laughter and excitement on people within an organization. Aggressive humor practices are negative humor applied by an individual to regiment others through ridicule (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003). It incorporates teasing, sarcasm and ridicule to demean and degrade others which is characterized with aggression and hostility with negative implication on a given relationship (Fine & De Soucey, 2005; Martin *et al.*, 2003). It is often used to victimize, ridicule or belittle others. Aggressive humor focuses on others and is maladaptive and potentially detrimental to others. It includes teasing someone about his/her mistake and laughing or joking about something to offend someone. It can also be explained as a kind of humor applied to ridicule, defeat, or exclude individuals or groups (Martin *et al.* 2003). The major objectives of individual employees who applied aggressive humor is to manipulate others through an implied threat of humiliation (Janes & Olsen, 2000) and it is expressed in sarcasm, teasing and put-down, where the initiator expresses humor with or without having it in mind that it might annoy its objects (Zillman, 1983). It can also be use by an individual to castigate, bring down, and cause other individuals some kind of prejudice.

### **The Concept of Employee Commitment**

Employee commitment is that state in which an individual is bound by his action to beliefs that

foster and sustain the activities of his own engagement in the organization (Salancik, 1977). It describes a psychological force that binds the employee to the organization (Mayer & Allen, 1997). The highly committed worker takes his or her work seriously and his or her allegiance resides with the organization to ensuring set objectives and goals are achieved. Hence, the committed employee submerged his own identity for the good of the organization (Mowday, Richard, Steer & Porter 1979). The commitment of the employee is important because high levels of employee commitment lead to favorable outcome for an organization which is a major determinant of organizational performance and success (Biljana, 2004). Organizational commitment has three measures according to Mayer and Allen (1997) which are also adopted in this study vis-à-vis affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment has to do with employee psychological attachment to an organization. It involves employee emotional involvement in the organization's value and goals. Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974) opined that affective commitment are characterized by three factors which are belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization; a willingness to focus effort on assisting the organization to achieving its goals, and finally a quest to maintain been a member of the organization. Furthermore, the formation of affective commitment includes knowing the organization's value and internalizing its principles and standards (Biljana, 2004). Affective commitment occurs when an individual employees stay with an organization due to the fact that they want to stay with the organization and are emotionally attached to it. Continuance commitment has to do with utilitarian gain from employment relationship, with the employee being unlikely to leave the organization based on the extent to which the contribution ratio is in balance or favorable to the employee (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989). It occurs when an employee acknowledges that he or she may lose financial benefits or recognize that there are no other possible choices. Becker (1960) observed that this type of commitment are influenced by accrued extrinsic benefits that would be lost if the employee was to leave the organization. In other words it refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving an organization; while normative commitment has to do with an employee's belief that he or she has a role to play in his or her organization based on a feeling of obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Thus, it occurs based on the belief or feeling of an obligation to remain with an organization. Furthermore, it is formed base on earlier experiences that are affected by either family-based experiences (family that values work loyalty) or cultural experiences (punishment against job-hopping) (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Normative commitment focuses on employee's obligation to stay with an organization, notwithstanding the amount of satisfaction he or she has derived from the organization over the years (Miller, 2001).

## **METHODOLOGY**

We adopted correlational research design which examines the relationship between aggressive managerial humor practices and employee commitment. The time frame applied in this work is cross-sectional studies which focused on employees as the unit of analysis of DMBs in Rivers State; therefore, research survey design was adopted using questionnaire as the research instrument which consist of four respond choices with 5 Point Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 indicating strongly disagree, disagree, indifference, agree and strongly agree respectively. Face and content validity was used for the validity of the research instrument while the reliability of the research instrument indicates a Cronbach Alpha value higher than 0.7; specifically the values for affiliative humor practices = 0.986; affective commitment= 0.979; continuance commitment=

0.977; and normative commitment = 0.978. The independent variable is aggressive managerial humor practices and it is used as a uni-dimensional variable while the dependent variable is employee commitment with three measures vis-à-vis affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. The population of the study comprised of 1027 employees of Head office Branches of 17 Deposit Money Banks operating in Rivers State with sample size of 285 derived using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination. Furthermore, out of the 285 questionnaires distributed; 254 representing 89.12% were retrieved while the other 31 (10.88%) questionnaire were not retrieved. Also, 22 of the retrieved questionnaire representing 8.66% were scrapped because they were not filled properly. Hence, 232 (91.34%) of the questionnaire retrieved were useful, it therefore served as the basis for analysis in this study. The data derived were analyzed through the use of Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics was used to test the relationship between the variables of the study through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 22 within a significance level of 0.05.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

**Relationship between Aggressive Humor Practices and Affective Commitment**

**Table 1:** Correlations Analysis showing the strength of relationship between aggressive humor and affective commitment.

**Correlations**

		Aggressive Humor	Affective Commitment
Aggressive Humor	Pearson Correlation	1	-.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	232	232
Affective Commitment	Pearson Correlation	-.329**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	232	232

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above Table 1, it shows that the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is -0.329, meaning that there is negative and weak relationship between aggressive humor practices and affective commitment. In other words inverse relationship exist between the variables and further application of aggressive humor practices will reduce the affective commitment of the employees in the DMBs studied. The relationship is further tested applying t-statistics as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2:** Effects of aggressive humor practices on affective commitment

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 228)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 3, 231)	sig f
Constant	5.002	11.183	.000						
Aggressive Humor	.060	7.44	.000	1.96	-0.329	0.108	1195.53	3.07	0.000

Dependent Variable; Affective Commitment

Source: SPSS Result, version 22.0

The result in Table 2 above shows that the correlation coefficient is -0.329 which indicates a negative and weak relationship between aggressive humor practices and affective commitment. The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.108 implies that 10.8% variation in affective commitment is explained by variations in aggressive humor practices. This indicates that this model has a good fit. The other 89.2% is elucidated by other variables not captured in this model. The F-calculated of 1195.53 had a corresponding significant F-tab of 3.07; we therefore conclude that the model is useful. Conventionally  $F-Cal = 1195.53 > F-tab_{(0.05, 231)} = 3.07$  hence the decision above is upheld. Also, aggressive humor practices had a calculated t-value of 7.44 and a corresponding Probability Value (PV) of 0.000. Hence, since the  $t-calculated = 7.44 > t-tabulated_{(0.05, 231)} = 1.96$ ; then the null hypothesis is rejected, hence there is a significant relationship between aggressive humor practices and affective commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria, however with r value = -0.329 this relationship is weak and negative.

**Relationship between Aggressive Humor and Continuance Commitment**

**Table 3:** Correlations analysis showing the relationship between aggressive humor and continuance commitment

		Correlations	
		Aggressive Humor	Continuance Commitment
Aggressive Humor	Pearson Correlation	1	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	232	232
Ctinuance Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.488**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	232	232

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above Table 3, it shows that the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is 0.488, meaning that there a positive and weak relationship exist between aggressive humor practices and continuance commitment. In other words positive relationship exist between the variables and further application of aggressive humor practices may enhance the continuance commitment of the employees in the DMBs studied. The relationship is further tested applying t-statistics as shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4:** Effects of aggressive humor practices on continuance commitment

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 228)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 3, 231)	sig f
Constant	3.417	7.987	.000						
Aggressive Humor	.011	2.760	.000	1.96	0.488	0.473	1195.53	3.07	0.000

Dependent Variable; Continuance Commitment

Source: SPSS Result, version 22.0

The result in Table 4 above shows that the correlation coefficient is 0.488 which indicates a positive and weak relationship between aggressive humor practices and continuance commitment. The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.473 implies that 47.3% variation in continuance commitment is explained by variations in aggressive humor practices. This indicates that this model has a good fit. The other 52.7% is elucidated by other variables not captured in this model. The F-calculated of 1195.53 had a corresponding significant F-tab of 3.07; we therefore conclude that the model is useful. Conventionally  $F\text{-Cal} = 1195.53 > F\text{-tab}_{(0.05, 231)} = 3.07$  hence the decision above is upheld. Also, aggressive humor practices had a calculated t-value of 2.760 and a corresponding Probability Value (PV) of 0.000. Hence, since the  $t\text{-calculated} = 2.760 > t\text{-tabulated}_{(0.05, 231)} = 1.96$ ; then the null hypothesis is rejected, hence there is a significant relationship between aggressive humor practices and continuance commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Relationship between Aggressive Humor and Normative Commitment**

**Table 5:** Correlations analysis showing the relationship between aggressive humor and normative commitment

		Correlations	
		Aggressive Humor	Normative Commitment
Aggressive Humor	Pearson Correlation	1	-.495**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	232	232
Normative Commitment	Pearson Correlation	-.495**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	232	232

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above Table 5, it shows that the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is -0.495, meaning that there is negative and weak relationship between aggressive humor practices and normative commitment. In other words inverse relationship exist between the variables and further application of aggressive humor practices will reduce the normative commitment of the employees in the DMBs studied. The relationship is further tested applying t-statistics as shown in Table 6 below:

**Table 6:** Effects of aggressive humor practices on normative commitment

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 228)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 3, 231)	sig f
Constant	3.251	7.146	.000						
Aggressive Humor	.064	2.003	.000	1.96	-0.495	0.245	1195.53	3.07	0.000

Dependent Variable; Normative Commitment  
**Source:** SPSS Result, version 22.0

The result in Table 6 above shows that the correlation coefficient is -0.495 which indicates a negative and weak relationship between aggressive humor practices and normative commitment.

The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.245 implies that 24.5% variation in normative commitment is explained by variations in aggressive humor practices. This indicates that this model has a good fit. The other 75.5% is elucidated by other variables not captured in this model. The F-calculated of 1195.53 had a corresponding significant F-tab of 3.07; we therefore conclude that the model is useful. Conventionally  $F\text{-Cal} = 1195.53 > F\text{-tab}_{(0.05, 231)} = 3.07$  hence the decision above is upheld. Also, aggressive humor practices had a calculated t-value of 2.003 and a corresponding Probability Value (PV) of 0.000. Hence, since the  $t\text{-calculated} = 2.003 > t\text{-tabulated}_{(0.05, 231)} = 1.96$ ; then the null hypothesis is rejected, hence there is a significant relationship between aggressive humor practices and normative commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria, however with r value = -0.495 this relationship is weak and negative.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

From analysis of collected data, we discovered negative relationship exist between aggressive humor practices and affective and normative commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria respectively. In line with the above findings, Martin et al (2003) expressed that aggressive humor has a negative effect on the physical and mental health of individuals which have strong effect on their commitment. In the same vein, Greengross and Miller (2008) articulated that aggressive humor hold predominantly negative relationship on employees' ability to express themselves in the organization. Hence, the inability of employees to express themselves as a result of aggressive humor practices can affect their affective and normative commitment. Aggressive Humor is a negative humor used by an individual to control other individual through ridicule (Martin et al., 2003) and incorporates teasing, sarcasm and ridicule to demean and degrade others (Fine & De Soucey, 2005). In other words, by using aggressive humor on employees has a way of demeaning their personality though it may not be the intentions of managers using it. The purpose of applying any humor practices is to invoke laughter in an individual that will bring about a good feeling psychologically but when it is used in such a way to demean the target personality, it might result to conflict and affect the target commitment to the organization negatively. Thus, Bippus (2003); Avtgis and Taber (2006) observed that aggressive humor escalate conflict among employees in the organization and lower job satisfaction as well as affect the employee's commitment. More so, Freud (1960) argued that expressing hostile humor result in the release of psychological tension and stifled aggressive impulses which can negatively affect both the affective and normative commitment of the employee.

More so, on the relationship between aggressive humor practices and continuance commitment, the relationship is positive. To further buttress this finding, humor serves as a social tool that fosters feelings and encourages a sense of friendship, yet it can also act as a demonstration of aggression. The reason aggressive humor though is potentially detrimental to others have a positive, strong and direct relationship with continuance commitment in this study it might be because most employees do not want to lose their job in this current economic situation. Nigeria economy is presently experiencing recession and lots of employees have been downsized as a result. Hence, the cost of quitting a particular job for other and the time it takes to getting another job is very high; as such most employees just want to stick to their job no matter the kind of aggressive humor thrown at them. Furthermore, aggressive humor practices is classified as constructive if it encourages interpersonal communication, job satisfaction and increases the value of the dyadic relationship while it can also be considered as destructive when it leads to relationship dissatisfaction and at least one partner having negative opinions about him

or herself and the relationship as a whole which can play a vital role in the commitment of the employee (Infante, 1987). Hence, managers must be aware that there is a climax to the level at which anybody could accept any negative joke and at that climax, things start to boomerang, therefore, they must if possible avoid the use of aggressive humor in the organization as it may result to conflict which can reduce the commitment of the employee. This implies that managers should be careful the way they apply aggressive humor practices in the organization, so that the commitment of their employees will not dwindle.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study statistically showed that significant and negative relationships exist between aggressive humor practices and affective and normative commitment respectively; and a significant and positive relationship exist with continuance commitment of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. From this findings, we conclude that aggressive humor practices has negative effect on affective and normative commitment respectively but has a positive impact on the continuance of employees of DMBs in Rivers State, Nigeria. Thus, the use of humor in organizational contexts can be hypothesized to have both advantage and disadvantage effects on individual and unit's commitment. However, one of the disadvantages of applying aggressive humor is the tendency to cause conflict. Before long or later, continuous use of aggressive humor is bound to offend someone which outcome could be disastrous for any organization and when it is applied too much or in a reckless way, it can crush down relationships that have been built over time which can affect the commitment of the employees; we therefore recommend that:

1. Managers in the DMBs in Rivers State should try as much as possible to avoid the use of aggressive humor practices as it can cause emotional harm to the employees, results to employee harassment which can affect the commitment of affected employees as well as others as a result reduce productivity and induce employee turnover in the organization.
2. Managers in the DMBs in Rivers State must be careful if at all they want to use aggressive humor and use it appropriately, sensibly and in a friendly manner so as to maximize its effectiveness without been interpreted negatively in order to increase their employee commitment without eroding any implication.

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