

VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF LUXURY HOTELS IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of value-based leadership on employee performance in the context of luxury hotels in the South-South Region, Nigeria. It also explores the moderating role of leadership intelligence, which encompasses emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of leadership capability. Employee performance is disaggregated into three constructs: task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance to provide a more nuanced understanding of workplace behaviour. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected using structured copies of questionnaire were administered to employees of selected luxury hotels. Out of 298 sets of questionnaires distributed, 268 valid responses were retrieved and analyzed, representing an 89.3% response rate. The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS and SPSS 26.0 to assess both the measurement and structural models. The findings revealed that all dimensions of value-based leadership comprising ethical leadership, and authentic leadership had statistically significant effects on employee performance. The study recommended among others that hotel management should institutionalize ethical leadership development programs that promote fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Keywords: Value-Based Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Employee Performance, Task Performance, Adaptive Performance

Introduction

Employee performance has long been one of the most talked-about topics in management – and for good reason. The most important asset any organization has is its people and how well they perform in turn affects, more than almost anything else, whether the organization flourishes or struggles. This is an especially keen truth in the hotel industry since the entire business concept is predicated on the quality of experience that a client takes away. Luxury hotels need staff who can read a room, react to a wide range of – often demanding – client requests, maintain flawless standards of service and defend the reputation the brand has worked so hard to develop. In a highly competitive industry like hospitality, employee performance is not simply an internal indicator, but the front line of competitive advantage, profitability and client loyalty (Oliveira et al., 2023). As Zhu and Liu (2023) put it simply, staff performance is the foundation of an organization's success, competitiveness and long-term sustainability. The ripples are felt everywhere – customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, financial performance, organisational agility, and the kind of workplace culture that attracts and maintains talent or silently drives it away.

Organisations that get this right, tend to build something durable, consistently. High performers don't only do their jobs effectively,

they build the kind of authentic customer relationships that eventually build brand loyalty (Oliveira et al., 2023). The financial case is just as compelling: Chen and Wu (2022) discovered that companies with engaged, well-trained employees are more financially successful than their competitors, mainly due to higher customer retention and lower costs associated with the revolving door of employee turnover. The strong performers do something less obvious but just as valuable—they set a benchmark. They set an example of accountability, innovation and collaboration in ways that elevate the people around them (Rodriguez & Martinez, 2022). Employee performance is generally considered across three aspects namely task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance (Koopmans et al., 2013).

Value-based leadership is at an interesting intersection of all of this. It's a leadership style founded on ethics, integrity, and a deep commitment to the values that guide decisions -- and it has been shown to be one of the most potent levers for influencing how employees show up to work. Employees that view their leaders' ethical behaviours as consistent and principled are more likely to reciprocate with higher commitment, innovation, and initiative (Zhang et al., 2022). The environment value-based leadership fosters — one of trust, openness and shared purpose — provides people with reasons to commit

themselves to their work beyond the transactional. Kim and Park (2023) discovered that leaders with this style are particularly adept at getting staff to buy into organisational goals, and that higher engagement and productivity are a natural outcome of that alignment.

The ramifications are huge, especially for hotel companies. When leadership behaviours are truly linked with organisational values and leaders are actively establishing a culture of shared purpose and trust, the prerequisites for sustained high performance are present. Therefore, the relationship between value-based leadership and employee performance is a topic of increasing interest to researchers and practitioners. There is a reasonable body of work on value-based leadership (Li & Chen, 2023; Park, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023) and on employee performance more generally (Chen & Wu, 2022; Rodriguez & Martinez, 2022). However, there is a significant gap in the empirical literature on the specific context of luxury hotels in Nigeria's South-South region. The present study aims to fill this vacuum by directly investigating the relationship of value-based leadership and employee performance in that particular environment.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of poor employee performance in the luxury hotels has affected the firm's performance and their competitiveness in the industry. Many luxury hotels firms fail to invest in comprehensive training programs, leaving employees unprepared to handle dynamic customer needs and operational challenges. Ahmed and Khan (2022) showed that individuals who haven't been trained well don't just underperform in isolated ways—the impacts spread. They are less accurate and less effective in communication, leaving clients with sub-par experiences. The pattern is such as to make a strong case for the treatment of continual training not as an optional investment but as a baseline need in order to sustain the kind of competence on which service businesses depend.

But beyond training, there's the question of how valuable people feel to begin with. That shows up in every client interaction, silently, in a service environment. Zhang and Liu (2023)

discovered that employees who feel underappreciated are unlikely to deliver their best work. No organization can fulfil its potential or stay in business for the long haul without treating employee performance seriously, and it starts with building an environment where people feel their contributions truly count. Inability of the employees to effectively carry out their task in the workplace has affected the operational efficiency of the hotels. Furthermore, low contextual behaviour reduces the helping behaviour among the employees and also negatively impact on the total performance of the hotels. However, the hotel firms has contributed very little to the advancement of the economy because most of the employees in the organization lack innovative capability and this has impacted negatively on the general wellbeing of the organization.

Addressing the problem of poor employee performance has become a very challenging issue and it is assumed that value-based leadership can help improve employee performance. Value based leadership have been a key factor in enhancing positive work outcome in terms of performance (Ariyo, 2016). Hence, this study will examine how value-based leadership in terms of ethical leadership, authentic leadership and authentic leadership relates with employee performance of luxury hotels in South-South Region, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives are;

- i. To examine the relationship between ethical leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the relationship between ethical leadership and adaptive performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the relationship between authentic leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- iv. To examine the relationship between authentic leadership and adaptive performance luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study;

- i. What is the relationship between ethical leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between ethical leadership and adaptive performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between authentic leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria?
- iv. What is the relationship between authentic leadership and adaptive performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria?

The following null hypotheses served as a tentative answer to the research questions.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between ethical leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between ethical leadership and adaptive performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between authentic leadership and task performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between authentic leadership and adaptive performance of luxury hotels in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

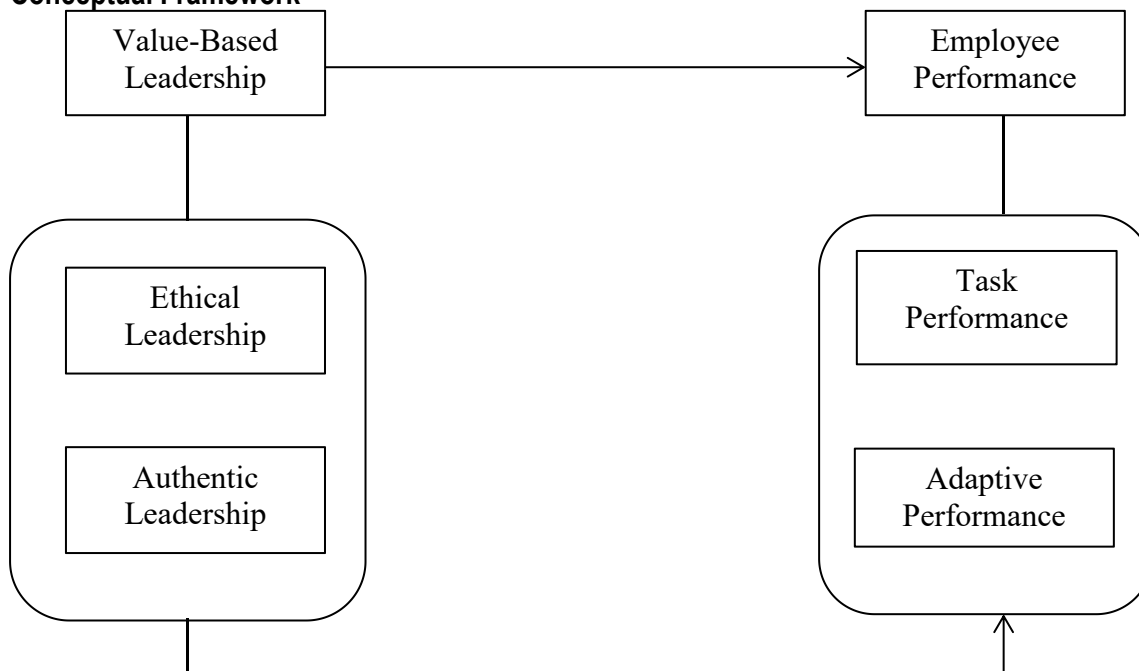


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of value based leadership and employee performance

Source: The dimensions of Value-Based Leadership were adapted from Eneanya, (2020), while measures of Employee Performance were adapted from Agogbua, Obi and Ezejirofor (2022)

Value Based Leadership

Value-based leadership is founded on a simple but strong premise – that the relationship between a leader and his or her followers is most meaningful – and most effective – when it is based on deeply held values, not authority, or position, alone. Reilly and Ehlinger (2007) call it leadership grounded on the core moral values of

honesty, empowerment, and a real commitment to social responsibility. These are not just abstract principles — they translate into real behaviours such as taking personal moral responsibility, acting with benevolence, contributing meaningfully to society, caring about fairness and following through on commitments to the people who depend on you, be it

employees, clients or broader stakeholders. Trevino and Brown (2004) captured this well: Values are the basic attitudes and ideas that influence how leaders and employees really behave, which helps explain why the concept of shared values is so appealing to many leaders.

The benefits of value-based leadership go well beyond the individual leader-follower dyad. Organisations that incorporate this type of leadership into their business practice get actual rewards: increased performance, greater organisational commitment, and people who are truly better delighted with their work. The research shows that when employees perceive that their leaders are acting with moral and ethical integrity, they reciprocate – they are more willing to support their colleagues, go the extra mile beyond their formal job requirements and are more committed to the organization than their contractual obligations dictate (Walumbwa et al., 2011). There's also a sustainability component to it. Value-based leadership connects the internal organisational health with the broader social and environmental responsibilities that increasingly define what it means to run a responsible organization (Doppelt, 2003). It encourages leaders to consider the long-term consequences of their decisions, on employees, customers, communities and the environment.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is not easy to define in a single sentence, in part because it is a combination of behaviours, and a distinct style of leadership in its own right (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Kanungo and Mendonca (2001) characterised it in terms of tension, a persistent pull between altruistic and self-interested incentives and the ethical leader is separated by the consistent choice to prioritise broadly held moral ideals and good judgement over personal benefit. That orientation is good for followers and good for the organization as a whole.

Treviño, Brown and Hartman (2003) observed that ethical leadership occurs in two connected forms, namely, in behaviours such as openness, fairness and caring in decision-making, and in personal qualities such as honesty, trustworthiness and integrity. Followers tend to see an ethical leader as both a moral person and a moral manager: someone whose

own beliefs are apparent in the way he or she lives and works, and who actively encourages others to apply the same ethical seriousness to what they do. It's not just about leading from the front, though that's important. It concerns intentional communication and emphasising ideals that influence the thinking and behaviour of employees throughout the organization (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Ko et al., 2018).

Authentic Leader Ship

Authentic leadership begins from the inside out. It's not a performance or a bag of tricks. It's rooted in self-awareness – the leader's true awareness of their own values, beliefs, and motives, and their willingness to allow those inner truths to show out in a consistent way in how they lead. Walumbwa et al. (2008) define it as a pattern of leader behaviour that promotes positive psychological growth of followers and a really ethical organisational climate. Rego et al. (2014) added that authentic leaders process information in a balanced way, maintain transparency in their relationships, and work to preserve harmony in the workplace—all of which supports the kind of environment where people can develop healthy self-regard and bring their best to their work.

Authentic leadership is a fairly new contribution to leadership philosophy, but deserves increasing attention for good reason. It has been demonstrated by several researches that it has a great influence on employee behaviour and promotes a harmonious working environment and positive organisational outcomes (Avolio et al., 2004; Bakari et al., 2018; Gilbreath & Benson, 2004; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Northouse, 2013). Leroy et al. (2015) found that authentic leaders are more cognisant of the values that inform their decision-making and therefore more capable of explicitly articulating those values, making their words and deeds more consistent in ways that followers notice and trust. As Shamir and Eilam (2005) argue, it is worthwhile to highlight that authenticity does not indicate moral or ethical uprightness per se. What it does entail is alignment – a congruence between what a leader does openly and what they truly think and value within. As Datta (2015) puts it, real leadership is ultimately a process of meaning-

making throughout time with self-awareness at its center.

Employee Performance

Employee performance, as defined by Hameed and Waheed (2011), is the output and productivity that results from employee development. This implies that employee productivity and performance are synonymous, and that the only way to attain both is through employee development, which includes training and development, which is a component of staffing. Similar to Hameed & Waheed (2011), Anitha (2014) asserts that employee performance is the financial or non-financial result that is directly related to an employee's performance and achievement. Employee performance is also defined by Jibrin-Bida and Abdul-Majid (2017) as a person's accomplishment and contribution in a practical and measurable manner. According to Durga (2017), employee performance is the degree to which a worker fulfills their responsibilities in a way that is appropriate and results-oriented.

In order for a company to accomplish its objectives, performance is crucial. One of the most important elements in raising organizational performance is employee performance. According to Mathis (2006), performance is influenced by three primary factors: (1) abilities, which include skills, interests, and personality traits; (2) efforts put forth, which include work ethics, motivation, attendance, and assignment design; and (3) organizational support, which includes management, coworkers, performance standards, training and development, technology, and equipment. Human resources must be sufficiently encouraged in order to be driven to meet organizational goals. In order to do this, they must be compensated with bonuses that can satisfy workers as well as career advancement and promotions. Furthermore, it is impossible to separate employee motivation from the development of high-quality human resources. The quality itself cannot be attained without constructive drive. The act of motivating oneself or another to perform a desired action is known as motivation. When employees are sufficiently motivated, their work ethic will improve.

Task Performance

Task performance is the agreement made in a contract between a manager and a subordinate or an employer and an employee to carry out a specific assignment (Pradhan & Jena, 2016). Task performance is the ability of an employee to carry out the tasks and responsibilities of the relevant function as stated in the job description. Efficiency in doing so is what determines task performance. Put another way, it concerns the effectiveness and efficiency with which the staff members carry out their duties. Task performance, as seen by the employee, is defined as "expected, evaluated, and rewarded" behaviours (Leung, 2007).

Adaptive Performance

Adaptive performance is really about how well a person can roll with the punches – reacting to changing demands, new circumstances, and unanticipated changes without losing effectiveness. Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, and Plamondon (2000) called this the capacity to meet the changing requirements of a job setting, and the assumption is that people who do this successfully are likely to be significantly more valuable to their organisations. Leiz, Niessan and Sarowsky (2009) noted that businesses are increasingly looking for individuals that are highly flexible and are able to cope with stress and still produce good outcomes, a combination that becomes more vital in a more unpredictable workplace. As Jund et al. (2014) put it, adaptable performance is a capacity and willingness to adapt to whatever work situation one finds oneself in. Towler (2020) also emphasises the speed dimension: it is not just about adapting but about adapting rapidly as settings vary. Shoss, Witt and Vera (2012) made a useful addition to this, noting that adaptive performance can be reactive i.e. in response to a change that has already taken place, or proactive i.e. predicting the change before it even occurs.

Adaptability has been found to be strongly related to professional results at the individual level. Park and Park (2019) also observed that people that adapt well tend to perform better in their professions and go further up the career ladder. At the level of the organization, the benefits are as obvious. Adaptive personnel result in higher levels of

customer satisfaction, more effective organisational learning, and more facile change management processes, all of which contribute to overall organisational health and resilience.

Empirical Review

There is a large and consistent body of data linking leadership style with employee performance and it goes one clear direction. Khuong and Nhu (2023) state that the survey data analysis shows that moral leadership can improve workers' productivity and intrinsic motivation. What their investigation showed was not a statistical correlation but a mechanism: Leaders who do the right thing are actually good at instigating the kind of internal fire that leads to increased performance, not because people are told to do better, but because they want to do better. This corroborates the results of Sari and Suryani (2023) in their comprehensive literature review. Ethical leadership has a positive influence on performance through the development of an ethical culture and increased employee engagement. They also got into a topic that deserves more attention than it generally receives: the full potential of ethical leadership is only tapped when it's intelligently attuned to the demands of different generations within the workforce – a one-size-fits-all approach leaves too much on the table. Asamoah et al. (2023) demonstrated this in practice with data from state-owned enterprises in Ghana. Leaders that model moral behaviour inspire their people to do the same and that inspiration leads directly to output.

The picture looks remarkably similar when you turn to real leadership. According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), authentic leaders are characterised by the following four traits: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced information processing and internalised moral position. These characteristics enable leaders to develop the deep, trustworthy relationships with employees that create the environment for high performance. An informed leader is aware of their strengths and blind spots and makes sure their behaviour is aligned with the values and objectives of the firm. Relational transparency does something more subtle, but no less important. It clears the air, it removes the kind of low-level ambiguity that gradually eats away at

confidence over time, and it gives people a real sense of where they stand.

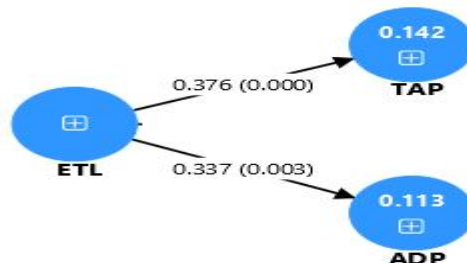
Recent study has filled out the picture. Authentic leadership has a significant positive impact on employee engagement (Avolio et al., 2023). Empirical evidence indicates that engaged employees tend to show proactivity, take responsibility for their work and dedicate themselves to organisational goals rather than simply perform their jobs. Leroy et al. (2022) noticed that workers working under authentic leaders had greater levels of dedication and job satisfaction, which directly contributed to their productivity. Psychological empowerment is one of the more interesting strategies of real leadership. Leaders that involve people in choices, sincerely appreciate their opinion and recognise their achievements, create in employees a better sense of competence and autonomy that inspires them to keep working effectively (Zhang et al., 2023). Empowered employees are more innovative, more self-starting and more able to sustain high performance over the long haul. Shamir et al. (2023) completed the picture by showing that great leadership also helps to alleviate the harmful effects of workplace stress – enabling people to keep up their performance even when the conditions around them are everything but easy.

Methodology

Cross-sectional survey technique, design was used in this study. The population of this study was purposively selected from the six (6) states that make up the South-South Region of Nigeria. These States are Edo State, Delta State, Cross Rivers State, Akwa-Ibom State, Bayelsa State and Rivers State. 5 Luxury hotels were selected from each state. The sample size of this study was determined using Taro Yamane (1968) formula. Following the determination of the sample size, the sample size of this study covers 298 respondents. The simple random sampling technique was used in this study. To gather relevant data for this study, primary data was collected through a meticulously designed questionnaire. Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of Smart PLS 4.0, was utilized in testing the hypotheses so as to examine the relationship

Figure 2. Structural Path Model of the Relationship of Value-Based Leadership, Employee Performance and Leadership Intelligence. The two components of value-based leadership, i.e. ethical leadership and authentic leadership, are operationalised by five indicators

(ETL1 to ETL5, and AUL1 to AUL5 correspondingly). The employee performance is measured in two domains i.e. task performance and adaptive performance. Both domains are measured in the same way with five items each (TAP1 to



TAP5, and ADP1 to ADP5).

Figure 3: Hypotheses 1 and 2

The findings for hypothesis two told a similar story. Ethical leadership showed a statistically significant moderate relationship with adaptive performance, returning a beta of 0.337, a p-value of 0.003, and an R^2 of 0.113. Employees guided by ethical leaders appear better equipped to navigate change, sit with uncertainty, and demonstrate the kind of flexibility that dynamic

service environments demand. Again, though, the explanatory power is modest — ethical leadership accounts for 11.3% of the variance in adaptive performance, suggesting that while it contributes meaningfully to how employees adapt, it is not the dominant driver of that adaptability. H_{o2} is nonetheless rejected based on the significance of the relationship

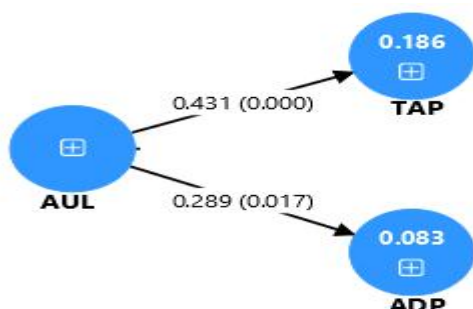


Figure 4: Hypotheses 3 and 4

Hypothesis H_{o3} : There is a statistically significant and moderately strong relationship between authentic leadership and task performance ($\beta = 0.431$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.186$). This suggests that when leaders act with self-awareness, transparency, and integrity, employees are more capable of meeting task-specific expectations effectively. Although the model demonstrates moderate predictive strength, authentic leadership accounts for 18.6% of the variance in task performance. Hence, H_{o3} is rejected.

Hypothesis H_{o4} : A statistically significant but weaker relationship exists between authentic leadership and adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.289$, $p = 0.017$, $R^2 = 0.083$). Although the influence is less pronounced than in previous hypotheses, it

still affirms that authentic leadership contributes meaningfully to employees' adaptability in dynamic work environments. The weak R^2 suggests that only 8.3% of the variance in adaptive performance is explained by authentic leadership. Consequently, H_{o4} is also rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Ethical Leadership and Task Performance

Ethical leadership and job performance

Hypothesis one validated what many who have experienced a really ethical leader already know from experience, that it affects the way you approach your job. When a leader publicly models fairness, honesty and accountability, something changes in the way employees connect to their own obligations. You don't need

someone to chase you or supervise you; you hold yourself to a standard because the tone around you makes it feel like the logical thing to do. Exactly this, discovered Khuong and Nhu (2023): that moral behaviour from leaders fuels internal motivation, and internal motivation is what actually pushes the needle on performance. To quote Asamoah et al. (2023) more simply: people prefer to imitate what they observe. When integrity is modelled at the top, it tends to ripple downward. This is related to commitment and job happiness (Sari and Suryani, 2023), which, when present, make people significantly better at doing their jobs properly.

Ethical Leadership and Adaptive Performance

Hypothesis three showed a substantial relationship between ethical leadership and adaptive performance, and it's not hard to see why. It's tougher to adapt to change when you don't feel supported or vulnerable. "It's easier when you trust the environment you're at. It's ethical leadership that builds that trust – that psychological safety for people to take the chance to modify, try something new or acknowledge they are struggling, without fear of judgement. Asamoah et al. (2023) noted that ethical leadership promotes a form of behavioural alignment that allows people to behave constructively in the face of surrounding changes. Sari and Suryani (2023) also point out something here that is worth noting: ethical leadership that genuinely considers generational differences in a workforce is more likely to be effective at developing the kind of resilience that organisations require — especially in industries such as hospitality, where change is not an occasional thing, it is just part of the job.

Authentic Leadership and Performance on Tasks

The fourth hypothesis indicated that authentic leadership has a significant positive effect on task performance, and the explanation is rather obvious. People perform better when they know what they're working toward, when they trust the person leading them and when the values being expressed feel genuine, not contrived. The kinds of environments that are typically created by authentic leaders — leaders that are transparent about who they are,

consistent in how they conduct and clear about what they stand for. According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), self-awareness and transparency of the leaders automatically attract employees towards more alignment with the organisational goals that directly feed into better job performance. According to Avolio et al. (2023), authentic leaders foster true engagement by the way they communicate and behave, and truly engaged people do not just show up, they take their work seriously. This same kind of leadership also increases commitment and job happiness, both of which have a reasonably direct positive impact on actual performance by people (Leroy et al., 2022).

Authentic Leadership and Adaptive Performance

Hypothesis six found a true but more moderate association between authentic leadership and adaptive performance – and that difference is one to note. Authentic leadership may not seem to dramatically boost adaptability, but it does seem to provide something maybe more durable: a consistent sense of groundedness that allows people to absorb change without coming apart. When your leader is self-aware, consistent and really involved in your wellness, you feel more solid and that stability is frequently what makes the difference between adjusting effectively and fighting to keep up. Zhang et al. (2023) found that authentic leadership promotes psychological empowerment, and that those who are psychologically empowered are more likely to stay on task and committed in the face of ambiguity. Shamir et al. (2023) further explained that real leadership helps to reduce work-related stress, and less stress simply makes people more ready to adapt and keep performing while the environment is always changing around them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the influence of value-based leadership (comprising ethical, and authentic leadership) on employee performance (task, and adaptive) in luxury hotels in South-South Region, Nigeria. The findings provided robust evidence that value-based leadership significantly influences employee performance, not only in terms of completing assigned duties

(task performance), but also in employees' capacity to cope with workplace uncertainty (adaptive performance). Each leadership dimension contributed uniquely ethical leadership instilled fairness and integrity that built trust; and authentic leadership elevated transparency genuine engagement. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended that;

- i. Hotel management should institutionalize ethical leadership development programs that promote fairness, transparency, and accountability as such will help enhance task performance.
- ii. Leadership development initiatives should integrate ethical reflection with change management strategies, equipping leaders to support staff emotionally and morally during organizational transitions or when unexpected challenges arise.
- iii. The leaders in the luxury hotels should promote leadership authenticity by encouraging self-awareness and value alignment among managers through regular feedback cycles, leadership coaching, and personal development planning as such will help improve the employee's task performance.
- iv. To improve adaptability, luxury hotel leaders should be trained to show vulnerability and model resilience during times of uncertainty, creating psychologically safe environments where employees feel secure to experiment, fail, learn, and adjust.

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