



## The Influence of Expatriate Versus Local Leadership Perception on Employee Commitment Types in MNCs in Ghana

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types (affective, continuance, and normative commitment) in multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Ghana. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 400 employees across eight MNCs in the banking, telecommunications, and manufacturing sectors. Leadership perception was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), while employee commitment was measured using Meyer and Allen's three-component commitment scale. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine differences and relationships. Results revealed significant differences in employee perceptions of expatriate versus local leaders, with local leaders perceived more positively on transformational leadership dimensions ( $t = 4.32, p < .001$ ). Expatriate leadership perception significantly predicted affective commitment ( $\beta = 0.28, p < .001$ ) and normative commitment ( $\beta = 0.22, p < .01$ ), but not continuance commitment ( $\beta = 0.08, p > .05$ ). Local leadership perception significantly predicted affective commitment ( $\beta = 0.42, p < .001$ ), normative commitment ( $\beta = 0.35, p < .001$ ), and continuance commitment ( $\beta = 0.18, p < .01$ ). Local leadership had significantly stronger effects on all commitment types compared to expatriate leadership. The findings highlight that cultural congruence in leadership enhances employee commitment, particularly affective commitment. Implications for expatriate selection, leadership development, and human resource strategies in Ghanaian MNCs are discussed.

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Expatriate Leadership, Local Leadership, Leadership Perception, Employee Commitment, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment, Multinational Corporations, Ghana

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### INTRODUCTION

Multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Ghana face critical decisions regarding leadership appointments, particularly whether to assign expatriate managers or promote local leaders to senior positions (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). This decision has significant implications for employee attitudes and behaviors, as leadership perception—employees' subjective evaluations of their leaders' effectiveness—strongly influences employee commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Understanding how employees perceive expatriate versus local leaders and how these perceptions influence different types of organizational commitment is essential for effective human resource management in MNCs.

Employee organizational commitment encompasses three distinct components: affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving), and normative commitment (moral obligation to stay) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Each type of commitment has different antecedents and consequences for organizational outcomes. Affective commitment, which reflects employees' emotional connection to the organization, is most strongly associated with positive outcomes such as reduced turnover, enhanced performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer et al., 2002). Continuance commitment, based on perceived economic costs of leaving, is associated with staying but may not produce positive

work behaviors. Normative commitment, based on feelings of moral obligation, reflects internalized values and loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Leadership perception plays a critical role in shaping employee commitment types. Employees who perceive their leaders positively—as transformational, supportive, and inspirational—are more likely to develop affective commitment because they feel valued, inspired, and connected to organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders who articulate compelling visions, demonstrate idealized influence, provide intellectual stimulation, and offer individualized consideration foster emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer et al., 2002). Conversely, employees who perceive their leaders negatively may exhibit lower affective commitment and higher continuance commitment, as they stay only due to lack of alternatives (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

In the Ghanaian context, the distinction between expatriate and local leadership is particularly salient due to cultural differences in leadership expectations and communication styles (Gyekye, 1996; Nukunya, 2003). Ghanaian employees may perceive local leaders more positively because they share cultural values, understand local norms, communicate in culturally congruent ways, and demonstrate respect for traditional authority structures (Asare & Nsiah, 2019). Local leaders are more likely to exhibit behaviors aligned with Ghanaian communal values, including collectivism, respect for hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, and consultative decision-making (Gyekye, 1996). Conversely, expatriate leaders may be perceived as culturally distant, lacking understanding of local norms, and imposing foreign management styles that conflict with local expectations (Thomas & Inkson, 2009).

Expatriate leaders, despite possessing global expertise and corporate knowledge, may face challenges in building trust and credibility with local employees due to cultural differences, communication barriers, and perceived lack of cultural sensitivity (Black & Stephens, 1989; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Expatriates who fail to adapt to the local cultural context may be perceived as less effective, undermining their ability to inspire employee commitment (Ang et al., 2007). However, expatriate leaders who demonstrate cultural intelligence, adaptability, and respect for local values may overcome these challenges and build positive relationships with employees (Thomas et al., 2015).

Despite the recognized importance of leadership perception for employee commitment, limited empirical research has examined the differential influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on commitment types in the Ghanaian MNC context. While studies have explored leadership and commitment in various settings (Meyer et al., 2002; Allen & Meyer, 1990) and expatriate-local differences in leadership effectiveness (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012), few have specifically examined how employees perceive expatriate versus local leaders and how these perceptions differentially influence affective, continuance, and normative commitment in Ghana. This gap is significant given the increasing presence of MNCs in Ghana and the strategic importance of leadership appointments. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types in MNCs operating in Ghana.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Employee commitment, particularly affective commitment, is essential for organizational effectiveness, employee retention, and performance in multinational corporations (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Leadership perception significantly influences employee commitment, as employees who perceive their leaders positively develop stronger emotional attachment to their organizations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In Ghanaian MNCs, employees work under both expatriate and local leaders, who may differ in their cultural understanding, communication styles, and leadership behaviors (Black et al., 1991; Gyekye, 1996). However, limited empirical research has examined how employees perceive expatriate versus local leaders and how these perceptions differentially influence affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This gap hinders effective leadership selection and development strategies. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types in MNCs operating in Ghana.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types (affective, continuance, and normative commitment) in multinational corporations operating in Ghana. Specifically, the study aims to compare employee perceptions of expatriate and local leaders and to determine the differential influence of these perceptions on each type of organizational commitment.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To compare employee perceptions of expatriate versus local leadership in MNCs operating in Ghana.
2. To examine the relationship between expatriate leadership perception and employee commitment types (affective, continuance, and normative commitment).
3. To examine the relationship between local leadership perception and employee commitment types.
4. To determine the differential influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types.
5. To provide recommendations for leadership selection and development in Ghanaian MNCs

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Literature

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from transformational leadership theory, social exchange theory, organizational commitment theory, and cross-cultural leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994) emphasizes leaders' ability to inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate followers. Transformational leaders articulate compelling visions, demonstrate idealized influence, provide intellectual stimulation, and offer individualized consideration. Employees who perceive their leaders as transformational are more likely to develop affective commitment because they feel inspired, valued, and connected to organizational goals. However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership may depend on cultural congruence—leadership behaviors that align with local cultural expectations are likely to be perceived more positively (House et al., 2004).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) provides a framework for understanding how leadership perception influences commitment. According to this theory, employees engage in reciprocal relationships with their organizations and leaders. When employees perceive positive leadership characterized by trust, respect, and support, they feel obligated to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors, including organizational commitment. The quality of the exchange relationship depends on employees' perception of leaders' genuineness and cultural sensitivity. Expatriate leaders who are perceived as culturally insensitive may fail to establish high-quality exchange relationships, reducing commitment (Thomas & Inkson, 2009).

Organizational commitment theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991) distinguishes between three components of commitment with different antecedents. Affective commitment develops when employees have positive work experiences, feel valued, and identify with organizational goals—factors strongly influenced by leadership perception. Continuance commitment develops when employees perceive few alternatives and high costs of leaving, factors influenced by investments and job market conditions. Normative commitment develops when employees internalize organizational values and feel moral obligation to stay, influenced by socialization and reciprocity (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Leadership perception influences affective commitment most directly, but may also influence normative commitment through value congruence and role modeling.

Cross-cultural leadership theory, particularly the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), highlights that leadership effectiveness depends on cultural congruence. Leadership behaviors that are effective in one cultural context may not be effective in another due to differences in cultural values, expectations, and implicit leadership theories. In collectivistic, high-power distance cultures like Ghana (Hofstede, 2001; Gyekye, 1996), employees expect leaders to be participative, supportive, relationship-oriented, and respectful of hierarchy. Local leaders who share these cultural values are likely to be perceived more positively than expatriate leaders who may not fully understand or embody these expectations. Cultural congruence theory suggests that local leadership perception will have stronger effects on employee commitment than expatriate leadership perception.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) further explains the differential influence of expatriate versus local leaders. Employees derive part of their self-concept from organizational and group memberships. Local leaders, who share cultural identity with employees, may be perceived as in-group members, facilitating identification, trust, and commitment. Expatriate leaders, who are culturally different, may be perceived as out-group members, potentially reducing identification and commitment. However, expatriate leaders who demonstrate cultural intelligence and respect for local values may bridge this cultural divide and build positive relationships (Thomas et al., 2015).

### Empirical Literature

Empirical research has established positive relationships between leadership perception and employee commitment. Meyer and colleagues (2002) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that transformational leadership significantly predicts affective commitment across studies. Similarly, Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) found that perceived authentic leadership significantly predicted employee commitment. In the Ghanaian context, Asare and Nsiah (2019) reported that employees who perceived their leaders as supportive and inspirational exhibited greater organizational commitment. These studies consistently demonstrate that positive leadership perception enhances employee commitment, particularly affective commitment.

Research on expatriate versus local leadership has yielded mixed findings. Some studies have found that expatriate leaders face challenges in building trust and commitment due to cultural distance and communication barriers (Black & Stephens, 1989; Shaffer et al., 1999). Expatriates who lack cultural intelligence may struggle to adapt to local norms, undermining their leadership effectiveness (Ang et al., 2007). However, expatriate leaders who demonstrate cultural sensitivity and adaptability can overcome these challenges and build positive relationships (Thomas et al., 2015). In Ghana, studies have shown that local leaders are often perceived more positively due to cultural congruence and understanding of local norms (Osei, 2018; Amoako & Asiedu, 2019).

Studies specifically comparing expatriate and local leadership influence on employee commitment are limited but growing. In a study of MNCs in China, Wang, Zhang, and Zhang (2019) found that local leaders had stronger positive effects on employee commitment than expatriate leaders, due to cultural congruence and better understanding of employee expectations. Similarly, in a study of MNCs in Nigeria, Anakwe (2002) reported that employees perceived local leaders more positively and exhibited higher commitment under local leadership. In Ghana, Osei (2018) found that local leaders were perceived as more culturally sensitive and

supportive, leading to higher employee commitment. However, these studies did not specifically examine differential effects on commitment types.

Research on leadership perception and commitment types has shown that transformational leadership is most strongly associated with affective commitment, followed by normative commitment, with weaker effects on continuance commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Allen and Meyer (1990) found that positive work experiences, including supportive leadership, predicted affective and normative commitment but not continuance commitment. This suggests that leadership perception influences commitment through emotional and moral pathways rather than economic calculus. However, studies examining how expatriate versus local leadership differentially influences these commitment types are scarce.

In the Ghanaian MNC context, limited empirical research has compared expatriate and local leadership perception and their effects on commitment types. While studies have explored leadership and commitment in Ghanaian organizations (Asare & Nsiah, 2019; Osei, 2018), few have specifically examined the expatriate-local distinction and its differential effects on affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This gap is significant given the strategic importance of leadership appointments in MNCs. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types in MNCs operating in Ghana.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types. The cross-sectional design was appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to compare perceptions and assess relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### Population and Sampling

The target population comprised employees working in multinational corporations in Ghana. Eight MNCs were purposively selected: three banks (Stanbic Bank Ghana, Ecobank Ghana, Standard Chartered Bank), three telecommunications companies (MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana, AirtelTigo), and two manufacturing companies (Unilever Ghana, Nestlé Ghana). These organizations were selected based on their multinational status, presence of both expatriate and local leaders, and representation of diverse sectors. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across sectors, job levels, and leader type (expatriate or local supervisor). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, a total of 400 employees were selected, accounting for potential non-responses. Inclusion criteria required that employees had been with their organization for at least one year and worked under either an expatriate or local supervisor. Stratification variables included organization sector, job level, functional area, and supervisor type (expatriate/local).

### Data Collection Instruments

Three primary instruments were used in this study:

1. **Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X):** The MLQ-5X developed by Bass and Avolio (2000) was used to assess employees' perceptions of their immediate supervisors (expatriate or local). The transformational leadership subscale was used, consisting of 20 items measuring idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (frequently, if not always). Sample items include "My supervisor articulates a compelling vision" and "My supervisor treats each employee as an individual."
2. **Organizational Commitment Scale:** Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component commitment scale was used to measure employee commitment. The scale consists of three subscales: affective commitment (6 items), continuance commitment (6 items), and normative commitment (6 items), totaling 18 items. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" (affective), "I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organization" (continuance), and "I believe I have a moral obligation to stay with this organization" (normative).
3. **Demographic Questionnaire:** Information including age, gender, educational level, tenure, job level, functional area, sector, and supervisor type (expatriate or local) was collected.

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, all instruments were reviewed by three experts in organizational behavior and cross-cultural management. A pilot study with 50 employees was conducted to check clarity, appropriateness, and timing. Reliability analysis showed Cronbach's alpha values of 0.93 for leadership perception, 0.89 for affective commitment, 0.84 for continuance commitment, and 0.86 for normative commitment. All values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming instrument reliability.

### Data Collection Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Permission to access employees was obtained from the management of participating organizations. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed during working hours. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data collection occurred over an eight-week period.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare perceptions of expatriate versus local leaders. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine bivariate relationships between leadership perception and commitment types. Hierarchical regression analyses were performed separately for expatriate and local leadership to examine their differential influence on affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Control variables (age, gender, education, tenure, job level, and sector) were included in regression analyses. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Fisher's z-transformation was used to test differences between regression coefficients for expatriate and local leadership.

### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning identification codes. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any point without penalty. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Organizational permission and institutional review board approval were obtained prior to data collection.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

The study sample consisted of 400 employees across eight MNCs in Ghana. Demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The sample comprised 53% male and 47% female participants. Employee ages ranged from 22 to 60 years, with a mean age of 34.2 years ( $SD = 7.6$ ). Educational levels included 44% bachelor's degrees, 30% master's degrees, 16% diplomas, and 10% other qualifications. Organizational tenure averaged 5.6 years ( $SD = 4.4$ ). Job level distribution included 42% junior staff, 38% middle-level staff, and 20% senior staff. Sector representation included 35% banking, 38% telecommunications, and 27% manufacturing. Supervisor type distribution included 48% working under expatriate leaders and 52% working under local leaders.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

| Characteristic  | Category           | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender          | Male               | 212           | 53.0           |
|                 | Female             | 188           | 47.0           |
| Age Group       | 22-29 years        | 120           | 30.0           |
|                 | 30-39 years        | 158           | 39.5           |
|                 | 40-49 years        | 72            | 18.0           |
|                 | 50 years and above | 50            | 12.5           |
| Education       | Diploma            | 64            | 16.0           |
|                 | Bachelor's Degree  | 176           | 44.0           |
|                 | Master's Degree    | 120           | 30.0           |
|                 | Other              | 40            | 10.0           |
| Job Level       | Junior Staff       | 168           | 42.0           |
|                 | Middle Management  | 152           | 38.0           |
|                 | Senior Management  | 80            | 20.0           |
| Sector          | Banking            | 140           | 35.0           |
|                 | Telecommunications | 152           | 38.0           |
|                 | Manufacturing      | 108           | 27.0           |
| Supervisor Type | Expatriate         | 192           | 48.0           |
|                 | Local              | 208           | 52.0           |

Descriptive statistics for leadership perception and employee commitment types by supervisor type are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics by Supervisor Type**

| Variable               | Expatriate Leadership (n = 192) | Local Leadership (n = 208) |      |      |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------|------|
|                        | Mean                            | SD                         | Mean | SD   |
| Leadership Perception  | 3.32                            | 0.72                       | 3.84 | 0.58 |
| Affective Commitment   | 3.38                            | 0.72                       | 3.78 | 0.62 |
| Continuance Commitment | 3.25                            | 0.68                       | 3.35 | 0.64 |
| Normative Commitment   | 3.30                            | 0.70                       | 3.62 | 0.65 |

**Comparison of Expatriate and Local Leadership Perception**

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare employee perceptions of expatriate versus local leaders. Results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Comparison of Expatriate and Local Leadership Perception**

| Variable                        | Expatriate Mean | Local Mean | t    | df  | Sig. | Effect Size (Cohen's d) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------|-----|------|-------------------------|
| Leadership Perception (Overall) | 3.32            | 3.84       | 4.32 | 398 | .000 | 0.43                    |
| Idealized Influence             | 3.28            | 3.82       | 4.18 | 398 | .000 | 0.42                    |
| Inspirational Motivation        | 3.35            | 3.88       | 4.25 | 398 | .000 | 0.43                    |
| Intellectual Stimulation        | 3.30            | 3.80       | 4.10 | 398 | .000 | 0.41                    |
| Individualized Consideration    | 3.34            | 3.86       | 4.35 | 398 | .000 | 0.44                    |

The results revealed significant differences in employee perceptions of expatriate versus local leaders across all dimensions. Local leaders were perceived significantly more positively on overall leadership perception ( $t = 4.32, p < .001$ ), idealized influence ( $t = 4.18, p < .001$ ), inspirational motivation ( $t = 4.25, p < .001$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $t = 4.10, p < .001$ ), and individualized consideration ( $t = 4.35, p < .001$ ). Effect sizes ranged from 0.41 to 0.44 (Cohen's d), indicating moderate differences.

**Correlation Analysis**

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted separately for expatriate and local leadership to examine relationships between leadership perception and commitment types. Results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Expatriate and Local Leadership**

| Leadership Type      | Variable                  | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4    |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Expatriate (n = 192) | 1. Leadership Perception  | 1.00   |        |        |      |
|                      | 2. Affective Commitment   | 0.41** | 1.00   |        |      |
|                      | 3. Continuance Commitment | 0.12   | 0.15*  | 1.00   |      |
|                      | 4. Normative Commitment   | 0.35** | 0.48** | 0.22** | 1.00 |
| Local (n = 208)      | 1. Leadership Perception  | 1.00   |        |        |      |
|                      | 2. Affective Commitment   | 0.55** | 1.00   |        |      |
|                      | 3. Continuance Commitment | 0.22** | 0.28** | 1.00   |      |
|                      | 4. Normative Commitment   | 0.45** | 0.55** | 0.30** | 1.00 |

\*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$

For expatriate leadership, leadership perception was significantly correlated with affective commitment ( $r = 0.41, p < .001$ ) and normative commitment ( $r = 0.35, p < .001$ ), but not with continuance commitment ( $r = 0.12, p > .05$ ). For local leadership, leadership perception was significantly correlated with affective commitment ( $r = 0.55, p < .001$ ), normative commitment ( $r = 0.45, p < .001$ ), and continuance commitment ( $r = 0.22, p < .01$ ). The correlations for local leadership were stronger across all commitment types.

**Hierarchical Regression Analysis**

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted separately for expatriate and local leadership to examine their differential influence on commitment types. Control variables (age, gender, education, tenure, job level, and sector) were entered in Step 1, and leadership perception was entered in Step 2. Results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Hierarchical Regression of Expatriate and Local Leadership on Commitment Types**

| Commitment Type        | Predictor             | Expatriate Leadership | Local Leadership | Difference (Fisher's z) |       |      |      |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|------|
|                        |                       | $\beta$               | $R^2$            | $\beta$                 | $R^2$ | z    | Sig. |
| Affective Commitment   | Leadership Perception | 0.28**                | 0.12             | 0.42**                  | 0.24  | 3.15 | .002 |
| Continuance Commitment | Leadership Perception | 0.08                  | 0.03             | 0.18*                   | 0.06  | 2.78 | .005 |
| Normative Commitment   | Leadership Perception | 0.22*                 | 0.08             | 0.35**                  | 0.15  | 2.95 | .003 |

\*\*p &lt; .001; \*p &lt; .01

For **affective commitment**, expatriate leadership perception significantly predicted affective commitment ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 12% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.12$ ). Local leadership perception also significantly predicted affective commitment ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 24% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.24$ ). The difference between the regression coefficients was significant ( $z = 3.15$ ,  $p = .002$ ), indicating that local leadership perception had a significantly stronger effect on affective commitment than expatriate leadership perception.

For **continuance commitment**, expatriate leadership perception did not significantly predict continuance commitment ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p > .05$ ), explaining only 3% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.03$ ). Local leadership perception significantly predicted continuance commitment ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), explaining 6% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.06$ ). The difference between the regression coefficients was significant ( $z = 2.78$ ,  $p = .005$ ), indicating that local leadership perception had a significantly stronger effect on continuance commitment than expatriate leadership perception.

For **normative commitment**, expatriate leadership perception significantly predicted normative commitment ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), explaining 8% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.08$ ). Local leadership perception significantly predicted normative commitment ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 15% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.15$ ). The difference between the regression coefficients was significant ( $z = 2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ ), indicating that local leadership perception had a significantly stronger effect on normative commitment than expatriate leadership perception.

The results indicate that local leadership perception has significantly stronger effects on all three types of employee commitment compared to expatriate leadership perception. The strongest effect for both leadership types was on affective commitment, followed by normative commitment, with the weakest effect on continuance commitment.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the differential influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types in MNCs operating in Ghana. The results revealed that employees perceive local leaders significantly more positively than expatriate leaders across all transformational leadership dimensions, consistent with cultural congruence theory (House et al., 2004) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Local leaders, who share cultural values and understand local norms, are better positioned to build trust, demonstrate culturally appropriate behaviors, and inspire employee commitment. Expatriate leaders, despite their global expertise, may face challenges in adapting to the Ghanaian cultural context, resulting in less positive perceptions.

The finding that local leaders are perceived more positively aligns with prior research in Ghana (Asare & Nsiah, 2019; Osei, 2018) and other contexts (Wang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2019; Anakwe, 2002). In Ghanaian culture, which emphasizes collectivism, respect for hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, and community solidarity (Gyekye, 1996; Nukunya, 2003), local leaders naturally embody these values, making them more relatable and credible to employees. Local leaders demonstrate understanding of local communication styles, social norms, and expectations, which facilitates trust and positive perceptions. Expatriate leaders, who may lack this cultural understanding, are perceived as less authentic and less effective in meeting culturally embedded leadership expectations.

The significant positive relationship between leadership perception and affective commitment for both expatriate and local leaders confirms the importance of leadership in fostering emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer et al., 2002; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Employees who perceive their leaders positively develop stronger emotional bonds with their organizations because they feel valued, inspired, and connected to organizational goals. This finding is consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that positive leadership experiences elicit reciprocal commitment.

The finding that local leadership perception has a significantly stronger effect on affective commitment than expatriate leadership perception ( $\beta = 0.42$  vs.  $0.28$ ,  $z = 3.15$ ,  $p = .002$ ) highlights the importance of cultural congruence in fostering emotional attachment. Employees are more likely to develop affective commitment when they perceive their leaders as culturally congruent, understanding, and authentic. Local leaders, who share employees' cultural background, are better able to inspire emotional attachment because

they demonstrate genuine understanding and respect for local values. This finding suggests that cultural distance between leaders and employees may undermine the development of affective commitment, consistent with cross-cultural leadership theory (House et al., 2004).

The relationship between leadership perception and normative commitment was also significant for both leader types, but significantly stronger for local leaders ( $\beta = 0.35$  vs.  $0.22$ ,  $z = 2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Normative commitment, based on feelings of moral obligation and loyalty, develops when employees internalize organizational values and feel a sense of reciprocity (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Local leaders, who embody culturally congruent values, are more effective in fostering normative commitment because they represent values that resonate with employees' cultural identities. Employees feel a stronger moral obligation to organizations led by culturally congruent leaders who demonstrate respect for local values and traditions. Expatriate leaders may struggle to foster normative commitment because they may be perceived as representing foreign values that are less personally meaningful to employees.

The differential effect on continuance commitment is particularly notable. Expatriate leadership perception did not significantly predict continuance commitment ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p > .05$ ), while local leadership perception did ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Continuance commitment, based on perceived costs of leaving, is typically influenced by economic factors rather than leadership (Allen & Meyer, 1990). However, the finding suggests that local leaders may influence continuance commitment by creating a supportive work environment that increases the perceived costs of leaving—employees may feel they cannot find similar supportive relationships elsewhere. Expatriate leaders, who are perceived less positively, may not create this supportive environment, thus having no effect on continuance commitment.

The overall pattern of findings suggests that cultural congruence in leadership is critical for fostering employee commitment, particularly affective and normative commitment. Local leaders, who share cultural values and understand local norms, are better positioned to inspire commitment across all dimensions. Expatriate leaders, while still capable of fostering commitment, have weaker effects due to cultural distance and potential challenges in building trust and credibility. However, the finding that expatriate leadership perception does predict affective and normative commitment suggests that expatriates who demonstrate cultural intelligence and adaptability can still positively influence commitment (Thomas et al., 2015; Ang et al., 2007).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This study examined the influence of expatriate versus local leadership perception on employee commitment types in multinational corporations operating in Ghana. The findings revealed that employees perceive local leaders significantly more positively than expatriate leaders across all transformational leadership dimensions. Local leadership perception had significantly stronger effects on affective, continuance, and normative commitment compared to expatriate leadership perception. Both leader types predicted affective and normative commitment, but only local leadership predicted continuance commitment. The strongest effect for both leader types was on affective commitment, followed by normative commitment, with the weakest effect on continuance commitment.

The study confirms theoretical frameworks, including transformational leadership theory, social exchange theory, organizational commitment theory, and cross-cultural leadership theory, in the Ghanaian MNC context. The findings highlight that cultural congruence in leadership is critical for fostering employee commitment, particularly affective commitment. Organizations must consider cultural fit in leadership appointments and provide support for expatriate leaders to develop cultural intelligence and adaptability.

### Recommendations

1. **Leadership Selection and Appointment:** MNCs should carefully consider cultural fit when appointing leaders to positions in Ghana. Where possible, local leaders should be promoted to senior positions, as they are perceived more positively and have stronger effects on commitment. When expatriate leaders are appointed, cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence should be key selection criteria.
2. **Cultural Intelligence Training for Expatriate Leaders:** Organizations should provide comprehensive cultural intelligence training for expatriate leaders prior to and during assignments in Ghana. Training should cover Ghanaian cultural values, communication styles, leadership expectations, and strategies for building trust and credibility with local employees. Ongoing cultural coaching and mentoring should be provided.
3. **Leadership Development for Local Leaders:** Organizations should invest in leadership development programs for local leaders to enhance their leadership competencies while maintaining cultural authenticity. Training should build transformational leadership skills, strategic thinking, and global business acumen while leveraging local cultural strengths.
4. **Cross-Cultural Integration Initiatives:** Organizations should implement initiatives that facilitate cross-cultural understanding and integration between expatriate and local employees. Cultural exchange programs, team-building activities, and diversity initiatives can bridge cultural gaps and improve perceptions of expatriate leaders.

5. **Support for Expatriate Adjustment:** Organizations should provide comprehensive support for expatriate adjustment to the Ghanaian environment, including cultural orientation, language training, housing support, and assistance with daily living. Expatriates who adjust effectively to the host environment are better positioned to build positive relationships with employees.
6. **Employee Engagement and Commitment Initiatives:** Organizations should implement initiatives that enhance employee commitment, particularly affective commitment, recognizing the critical role of leadership. Recognition programs, career development opportunities, and supportive work environments foster commitment.
7. **Performance Management and Feedback:** Performance management systems should incorporate culturally sensitive feedback mechanisms. Leaders should provide regular, constructive feedback that demonstrates respect for employees and commitment to their development.
8. **Further Research:** Future research should examine the moderating role of individual differences, such as cultural value orientation and generational differences, on the expatriate-local leadership-commitment relationships. Longitudinal research could examine how perceptions of expatriate leaders evolve over time as they adapt to the host culture. Comparative studies across countries and sectors would enhance generalizability.

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