



## DIFFERENTIAL-CONFIGURATION MODEL AS A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP ON SUBORDINATE IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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**Abstract:** *Psychopathology is a leadership trait possessed by leaders in order to successfully run the affairs of their organizations be it business, social entity, educational, and private entity. psychopathic leadership, therefore, is no longer a story in organizations, especially in educational organizations. An area of interest on psychopathology in leadership is with respect to the engagement of subordinates to prescribed duties and commitment to assigned jobs under psychopathic leaders. In developed economies, various studies exist about the psychopathology of leadership. In this study, there is the challenge of subordinates not understanding the traits possessed by their psychopathic leaders which affect staff engagement and commitment to prescribed duties and assigned jobs. Grounded in Differential-Configuration Model, this study investigates how subordinates that are under psychopathic leaders understand the traits possessed by the leaders and what impact does the traits contribute to their engagement and commitment to prescribed and assigned duties for the success of organization's performance and productivity. This study was framed in interpretative epistemology. A qualitative methodology and a case study research design was adopted. Interviews were conducted with 8 library staff located in an economic developing society in Africa—the Kaduna State University (KASU), Kaduna Nigeria. The study used the thematic analysis process to identify 76 narratives. The narratives are organized into 4 major categories and further collapsed into 2 theoretical constructs explaining how subordinates (staff of KASU library) under a psychopathic leader understand his personality traits and how these personality traits affect the subordinates' engagement and commitment to prescribed and assigned duties. the findings denote that KASU library staff view their leader extremely bold, adventurous, focussed, dedicated and have emotional resilience.*

**Keywords:** Psychopathology, Leadership, Differential-Configuration Model, personality traits

### Introduction

Psychopathology of leadership has been existing since the beginning of human existence. It is also by means of a novel because it has received lots of attention in all aspects of life when issues in relation to leadership are discussed. Psychopathic leaders in higher educational institutions have exhibited traits that differentiate their leadership personality from one institution to another. They also demonstrate special characteristics that enable them to exercise leadership power in order to keep their

institutions focussed. (Dutton, K., & McNab, A. (2014), Becker, S. 2015, and Oleg Nekrassovski 2016)

Globally a five-factor personality model has been adopted for most studies indicating major personality traits that relate psychopathic leadership; they are (1) openness (2) conscientiousness (3) extraversion (4) agreeableness (5) neuroticism. ( Afaf Othman 2015, JERRY S. WIGGINS 1996). In Nigeria's setting, leaders in higher education institutions take advantage of these personality traits to control their subordinates in order to achieve their organizational objectives.

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### **Statement of the problem**

Hence, two nagging issues are a recurring concern for psychopathic leaders in developing economies; lack of engagement to prescribed duties and lack of commitment to the job by subordinates. Lack of engagement to prescribed duties and lack of commitment to any assigned job by subordinate leads to low performance and poor productivity at workplaces. Jalal Hanaysha (2016). Leadership scholars have conducted several studies aiming at having a better understanding of the personality traits of leaders over their subordinates. Despite all these studies, the problems lack of engagement to prescribed duties and lack of commitment to the assigned job by subordinates still persist. (Wafi Assiri, 2016). Improving the performance and productivity of subordinates in the developing economies under psychopathic leaders calls for a fresh perspective. A potentially useful perspective is to implore the subordinates as an instructional active member in higher educational institutions with the intent of understanding leadership personality traits in achieving organizational objectives.

Subordinates understanding of leaders' personality traits offer the best opportunity for total engagement to prescribed duties and commitment to assigned job. In leadership the concept of psychopathology - personality traits has been advocated by scholars for decades. For instance, Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, (2002) Differential-Configuration model has stressed the critical importance of psychopathology in leadership.

### **Research Questions:**

This study, therefore, raised three fundamental questions:

1. How do subordinates in higher education institutions in developing economies approach the psychopathic nature (personality traits) of their leaders?
2. How do the psychopathic nature (personality traits) of the leaders' influence engagement and commitment to prescribed and assigned job expected of the subordinate?

3. What pedagogical challenges do subordinate encounters while engaged in prescribed duties and committed to their assigned job?
4. How does the Differential-Configuration model explain the role of a subordinate under a psychopathic leader?

### **Significant of the Study**

This study has a conceptual and pragmatic significance. Conceptually, findings of the study are translated into a testing theoretical model depicting engagement and commitment to the job by subordinates under psychopathic leaders. Pragmatically, findings of the study are potentially useful to policymakers and donor agencies with an interest in the area of higher education in developing economies.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Psychopathology in leadership is a wide subject area of study. It has components of clinical psychology, medical humanities and social psychology which are all complicated to study in-depth. The study tries to confine itself to engagement to prescribed duties and commitment to assigned jobs by a subordinate under psychopathic leaders. The study has brought to the forefront that developing subordinates under psychopathic leaders need to realize the extraordinary. The study relates to higher education organizations in developing economies. Since there are a large number of higher education organizations in the developing economies, making a choice of a particular institution was difficult. However, the researcher selected Kaduna State University (KASU) library. The KASU library has the required facilities, resources, and staff that provide services under a psychopathic leader. The psychopathic leadership of the library makes use of the staff, resources, and facilities thereby improving engagement to prescribed duties and commitment to assigned jobs by a subordinate. The topic of the study chosen made it difficult to get adequate data from the psychopathic leaders because the researcher tried to explore his psychopathic personality traits possessed by the leaders from the subordinate point of view. The timing was



another constraint because the leader was not rightly available too at the time of data collection.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual literature**

Psychopathology derives from two Greek words: 'psyche' meaning 'soul', and 'pathos' meaning 'suffering'. Originally, 'psychopathology' is interpreted to mean the origin of mental disorders, its nature, and its characteristics (Rudd, 2013). Mental disorder is classified into categories of developmental, anxiety, cognitive, mood, eating, sleeping, substance, psychotic, somatoform and personality disorders, and traits. (World Health Organisation, 2013 ) In the 20th and 21st Centuries, psychopathology experienced a dynamic transformation and was viewed by phenomenologists as the relationship between one human life and another. This idea became popular among therapists that it is the interpersonal relationship that is of paramount importance for good mental health. (Gerhardt, 2008; Rudd, 2008; Gilbert, 2010).

Good and mental health is viewed as a yardstick to interpersonal relationship relations among a group of persons that are focussed on achieving certain aims and objectives. The ability of a group to be focussed and achieve its objectives must be guided by effective leadership. Psychopathology in leadership are traits exhibited by a leader to improve the interpersonal relationships in the group for the success of the entire group or system. (Hermann, 2002)

#### **Psychopathology in leadership: Personality traits in leadership that influence subordinates**

Psychopathy has currently gained a lot of attention in leadership research (Barelds, Wisse, Sanders, and Laurijssen, 2018) It cannot be separately discussed from the personality traits of leaders in every organization. (Abdul-Razak Abubakar 2018, Robert Hogan and Timothy Judge 2019) leadership scholars have proposed that psychopathic traits are often correlated with occupational or interpersonal success. (Lilienfeld, S.O et.al 2014, Psihološka istraživanja and Janko Međedović 2019), Psychopathic leaders have the advantage of

personality traits that they use to control the subordinate in an organization in order to achieve their objectives. (Barelds P. H. et al (2018), Psihološka istraživanja and Janko Međedović (2019). Bronti Baptiste (2018). Leaders who are psychopathic in nature are known to be bold, dedicated to their jobs and have the ability to work under stress (Spain S. A 2016) Reinout, E. de Vries (2019).

Psychopathology applied in leadership has the capacity to change the lives of many in the society we live in and to improve commitment and dedication to work. Stanger M. (2016)

Psychopathology has been shown to promote a deeper understanding between a boss and subordinate to achieve a common goal. Reinout E. de Vries (2019). Closely related to achieving the organizational goal has indicated that psychopathic leaders have the ability to improve friendship and smooth relationships in the family and community.

Studies have reported the negative consequences of the psychopathic leaders which include not understanding their nature, people assume they are without emotions, and only focus on their personal egos (Elliot C.N (2018), Zepinic V. (2019). Psychopathic leadership is faced with another major challenge of been negatively viewed by subordinates and other colleagues at workplaces. Apart from been viewed a been negative at all times, psychopathic leaders are seen to be affected by the stuff of clinical illness. These challenges occur or are brought about by the lack of understanding of the subordinates to understand the personality traits possessed by their leaders. (Clive R. Boddy (2015)

#### **Research Methodology**

The study deals with perception and therefore adopted interpretive epistemology alongside using social constructionism research philosophical paradigm. The researcher focussed on getting an explanatory result from the background adopted a qualitative methodological approach in line with social constructionist epistemology. Musa (2013) denotes that 'Qualitative methodology refers to the method of inquiry



employed to gather an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and human behavior especially feelings or experience and the reason that governs such a behavior'. Qualitative methodology is understood to be best suited for studies. The qualitative method gives the researcher the ability to learn from participants about the leadership experience in their own settings. In addition, qualitative research allows the participants to interpret what they experienced under the leadership of a psychopathic. One major purpose of this study is to understand the thinking of library staff under a psychopathic leader and to explore the constraints that library staff face while working under a psychopathic leader in developing economies.

Notwithstanding, the researcher adopted a case study research design for the study. A case study research design selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study (Acker 2007) a case study research design is considered best for this study because it creates an opportunity for the selection of a limited number of individuals as a subject of the study. (Merriam, 1998). Out of a total number of 42, 15 was selected through purposive technique particularly, criterion sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest that is those who are best at assisting the research answer the research questions raised. (Karolina Barglowski (2018). ). Purposive sampling is suited for this study, as it offers a frame for selecting participants with the experience of working with a psychopathic leader. Therefore, respondents for this study must meet the following criteria: (1) must be an employee of Kaduna State University (KASU) (2) Who have been working in KASU library (3) must be working in the main university library not less than 3 years at 2020 (4) must have acquired an additional degree after their undergraduate studies. The KASU library was selected because the staffs are well known and recognized through the services they provide for the university community. These services are well recognized and utilized by the

university community even in the midst of resources constraint been experienced in developing economies.

### **Research Framework**

This section provides background on Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, (2002) differential-configuration model adopted as a framework for the study. The section discussed an overview of the model and followed by the construct of the model. The section also provides an understanding of how the model illustrates a study on engagement and commitment to the job by subordinates under psychopathic leaders.

The basic concern and purpose of this model are that it views psychopathic leaders as being possessed with personality traits to be successful leaders. This model views psychopathy as a number of distinct combinations of various different psychological traits (Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, 2015) The model emphasizes the importance of the personality traits possessed by the leader in the organization to enforce engagement and commitment to work Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, 2015). The theory was composed of two basic constructs. For the purpose of this study, the two basic constructs were adopted: Construct of Boldness and Construct of conscientiousness. These constructs are discussed below:

### **Construct of Boldness (COB)**

The Differential-configuration model depicts The Construct of Boldness (COB) as adaptive personality traits possessed by a psychopathic leader. COB is a combination of traits such as immunity to stress, emotional resilience, venturesomeness, social poise, and charisma. The key to COB is that the leader is prone to adapt to any situation that occurs fearlessly in order to successfully lead his/her subordinate (Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, 2015)

### **Construct of Conscientiousness (COC)**

This construct is easy to explain and understand. The Differential-configuration model views psychopathic leaders to have a personality trait of being careful, diligent and dedicated. It also sees psychopathic leaders



as focussed and serious-minded in nature. (Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, 2015)

**Data collection**

Through using an in-depth interview, data were collected for this study. According to Nayeem Showkat and Huma Parveen (2017). in-depth interviews do allow the participant to communicate much more freely and to provide more detailed descriptions when compared to semi-structured interviews; they are the primary or sole source of data. It also provides for an in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located, and for very detailed subject coverage (Musa 2013). The interview session was in various stages; stage one: began with the administration of informed consent form. The consent form was mainly to implore the participants’ permission to willingly participate in the interview and it sought permission to record the dialogues. The second stage: was to inform the respondent that their discussion was to be treated as confidential and meant for academic research purposes only. Stage three: the interview was conducted at Kaduna State University’s main library complex. Questions were asked include how do library personnel view the leadership of the library? How are library staff engaged in prescribed duties and commitment to assigned jobs? What constraints do library personnel experience in engagement and commitment to work in the academic library? It took 11 hours to be able to adequately conduct the interview through personal conversation. Probing techniques were adopted during the interviews to solicit for in-depth information gather confidence in their responses. Collecting the data this way gave way to the researcher having robust in-depth information. Saturation of the interview occurred after the 8th participant was interviewed. Data saturation is the point when there are no new categories, themes, or explanations emerging. (Benjamin Saunders et.al (2019) and Susan C. Weller et.al (2018). The data were transcribed for analysis. Stage four: the interview was conducted at Kaduna State

University’s main library complex and Stage five, data was analyzed into themes and sub-themes

**Data Analysis**

In this study, the analysis of the interview transcript was carried using the inductive approach. The inductive approach means that patterns in the data collected were identified through the process of using thematic codes. In order to do this, the researcher adopted Miles and Huberman (19.....) three-phase thematic analysis procedure. The three phases are made up of (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and (c) conclusion drawing, and verification. The coding steps indicated that the researcher had to read, read and re-read the narratives several times, then pick out relevant and related statements from the narrations of the respondents to develop themes that give information about the psychopathic leadership.

The narratives were coded into 76 open codes which were recorded in a spreadsheet. The 76 open codes were merged into 11 smaller categories. The smaller category was identified as a class of sub-categories. The class of the sub-categories was further submerged into further sub-merged into 4 emergent categories. The method for this data analysis was adopted by Miles et al (2018)

This is indicated on this table

**Table 1. Summary of data analysis**

Data Reduction	Data Display	Conclusion Drawing and Verification
Initial read, read and re-read interview transcripts while searching for similarities and differences in themes by underlined using pen (open code). Recoded in plain-sheets of paper.	Data display began by listing all the codes and creating meaning out of relevant text segment (open codes) Narratives coded into 76 open codes. Related open codes were	11 number of sub-categories labels and narrowing down to final overarching themes or categories into 4 emergent categories (wider categories). The final categories were then narrowed and fitting wider



The aim is to condense the data into a smaller and more manageable size	identified and grouped together to form sub-categories. 11 sub-categories	categories into 2 theoretical constructs
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Source: Summary of data analysis adopted from Miles et al (2018)

### Description of Emergent Categories

This section describes the six (4) categories and thirteen (11) sub-categories that emerged from the seventy-six (76) open codes. The categories, sub-categories, and quotations were arranged properly in an orderly manner. This pattern of arrangement was used by the researcher in order to create simple avenues for the reader to draw reflection and make meaning from the responses of the participants. The section was carefully organized and arranged based on the questions asked during the data collection process.

### Findings

Data collected for 8 respondents were in the form of phrases and sentences provided multiple views on how the staff of Kaduna State University Library views the leadership of the library.

### How do KASU staff view the leadership of the head of your library?

To uncover how KASU staff view the leadership of the library, four categories emerged in their evaluation of the leadership as good and exemplary leader, dedicated and a motivator, encourages his staff and always busy as discussed below.

**Good and exemplary leader:** This research subcategory indicated that the leadership of the library is good and lives leadership quality that is examples for others to copy. Some respondents recounted that *‘What I can say actually he is a good leader and always motivating his staff to work hard, in fact, he is an exemplary leader’* other respondents revealed that *“to me, he has such qualities he will be considered to be as an exemplary leader.”*

**Dedicated and motivator:** This research subcategory indicated that the leadership of the library is

dedicated to his work so also he wants every staff to take their job seriously. One respondent narrated that *‘The leader is also dedicated to his work so he wants every staff too to be working’*

### Encourages staff to meet daily objectives and task:

This research subcategory indicated that the leadership of the library is dedicated to his work so also he wants every staff to take their job seriously *“The leadership of the overall head of the library is so much motivated and wonderful, because all he wants, he wants his staff to meet their target and objectives given to them, he motivates his staff, encouraged them to work”*. Yet another has this to say *‘What I like in his leadership he always like you to work and he always encouraging his subordinate to work, he wants you to be always on your desk working to meet that target, he set objective and make sure you archived that objective, he always want to work so I like that’*

**The leader is always doing new projects:** This subcategory includes narratives related to how the staff of KASU library views the leadership of the library. The staff interviewed explained that the leadership of the library is such that each staff should be seen busy on new projects and working all the time. One responded indicated that *‘every day as we come into the office our head wants to see us very busy because he is always working’*. One respondents elucidated that *“he wants each and every staff in the library to be able to concentrate on their job and he dislikes absent to work and coming late”* in addition others described the leadership as that *“he wants his staff to meet their target and daily objectives that are given to them, he motivates his staff.”*

### How do KASU staff commit themselves to assigned duties (work) in the university library?

In order to ascertain the KASU staff commit themselves to assigned duties in the university library. The staff from the KASU library were asked to describe the activities indicating how they are committed to the work. From the 8 respondents, three ways on how they commit themselves to work were described as they are employed



to be committed, committed because of fear of the leader and it is their responsibility to be committed as discussed below.

**Employed to be committed:** This subcategory is the evaluation of how the staff of the library is committed their day to day work. This finding shows that the respondent's dedication to their work because by the nature of the fact that they are employed they are supposed to be committed. Some of the KASU library staff narrated that *"Yes actually am employed to do so I have to work hard"*. Similarly, one respondent explained further that *"it has become a part of what you are since that is what you are employed for, that what you are employed for, you have to be committed"*

**Committed because of fear or boss will shout:** these findings exposed that some respondents committed to working because of fear of the boss. Some are committed because the leader will be angry at them. As one respondent rightly observed that, *"In these cases, I fear my boss. Whenever I am in the office I have to commit myself to work because I don't want in a situation my boss sees me not working, so I commit myself to work whether he is around or not?"* This narration was confirmed by another respondent, *"even if you are done with your objective you yourself most find something doing in order to save yourself from shouting from your boss because he doesn't accept excuses."*

**It is my responsibility to committed:** This subcategory exposed that it is the responsibility of KASU staff to be responsible for their jobs under a psychopathic leader. Some KASU library staff narrated that *"I commit myself to work you know in life whenever you are given a responsibility you have to commit to it, it has become a part of me"*. From another respondent, the explanation was that *"One of the reasons why I commit myself to work is that you know in life whenever you are given a responsibility you have to commit yourself to it most especially in this our library that our boss wants his staff to be more responsible"*

**Q3, How do you engage yourself to prescribe tasks (work) as a staff in Kaduna state university library?**

In order to deduce how the staff of the KASU library engage themselves to prescribed task in the university library. The staff from the KASU library were asked to describe the efforts they put as well as following the rules of the leadership. Emerging from the responses of the 8 participants, three ways on how they are engaged to work emerged which are to meet daily, weekly and monthly objectives, to learn as the job is part of them and the boss is monitoring as discussed below.

**To meet daily, weekly and monthly objectives:** This subcategory is to elusudateKASU library staff meeting the targets and objectives. This finding shows that the main reason why the staff is engaged in their work is to meet their objectives and target. Some of the respondents noted that *"If I do not engage myself I will not meet my not meet up with my daily or monthly objectives, 'I am always trying to archive that that goal' I want to see myself working unconsciously always in the library"*.

Similarly, one respondent narrated further that *"I am employed to work so I have to work hard and truly engage myself in order to archive the daily and weekly target and objectives. like in this library the kind of leadership we have a person has to engage himself to work, achieve your objective in order to save yourself from shouting from your boss because he doesn't accept excuses"*

**To learn and to do my job better:** these findings revealed that some staff of the KASU library are engaged to prescribed duty because they are eager to learn new things as they see their jobs as part and parcel of their lives. Some respondent denotes that, *"The job has become a part of me, 'I am engaged everyday' Our boss encourages us to work hard and he engages in new things every day and we learn"* This narration was confirmed by another respondent, *"You see it is good to learn what others are doing like my boss is always engaged in one new project and the other. So also I"*



*engage myself to also learn new things and do my things better.”*

**My boss monitors me:** This sub-category explained that they are engaged in prescribed duties under a psychopathic leader because they are monitored. Some KASU library staff narrated that *“The reason why I am engaged in my work is that the boss is always monitoring me”*. Yet another responded narrated that *“Am engaged and dedicated to my work because our boss always monitors me. In a situation that whether my boss sees me or not I do my job, and myself to work whether he is around or not?”*

#### **Challenges faced while working with a Psychopathic Leader**

To uncover the challenges faced by the staff of KASU library while working with a Psychopathic Leader, the staff were asked to describe the problems they encounter as subordinate under a psychopathic leader. The objective of this is to acknowledge the common challenges that they face. From the responses gotten three categories of challenges emerged from the 8 respondents. They are lack listening to his subordinates, lack of accepting complains and focusses on the result only which are discussed below.

**Lack of listening to his subordinates complain:** This research subcategory indicated that the greatest challenge that the staff of KASU library under the psychopathic face is lack of the boss listening to his subordinates. Some respondents recounted that *“He will not listen to a challenge even when it is genuine, all he wants is results only”*. While another participant explained further that *“Hardly wait and listen to his subordinates what he wants is to meet your target and objectives”* Yet another respondent narrated that *“The challenge I face under a psychopathic leader is he doesn’t accept excuses or complains. If he says do these, he wants you to do it.”*

**Lack of accepting complaints:** lack of accepting complaints is associated with the headship of the KASU library. The leadership sometimes listens but does not accept any complaint and is not moved by the

subordinate’s emotions at all times. Respondent views on this constraint were as follows, *“Sometimes in the e-library, there is no light or network but when the leader comes, what he is after is the result he doesn’t accept the challenge and yet, we have the challenge”*.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

The discussion of findings was arranged in line with Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, (2002) differential-configuration model adopted as a framework for the study as discussed below

#### **Construct of Boldness (COB)**

Findings from this study revealed that leadership of the library is psychopathic in nature because the is always bold to venture into new projects and always busy. In addition, leadership is always committed to duty. Another finding from this study revealed that the leadership of the KASU library is dedicated and motivates staff to have the ability to move to the next step with staff.

#### **Constructs on Conscientiousness:**

Three major aspects were identified as careful by encouraging the staff to focus on achieving the day to day objectives in the KASU library. Findings from the study revealed that KASU library leadership is also diligent to be admired by all his staff through the exemplary leadership style he has adopted. Serious mindedness is really shown in the finding as the leadership does not listen to the complaint of the KASU library staff. Excuses and complaints are not accepted but what the leadership expects from the subordinate is perform excellently on the prescribed duties and committed to their ascribed duties.

#### **Conclusion**

Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith, (2002) differential-configuration model has shown that the construct of boldness and construct of conscientiousness aimed at improving the engagement of staff to prescribed jobs and commitment to assigned duties. The ability to improve engagement and commitment is vital in order to improve performance and staff productivity in the KASU library.



### Future Research

To improve the engagement of staff to prescribed jobs and assigned duties, there is a need to conduct more research on understanding the personality traits of leadership in developing economies amidst health challenges and insecurity. In addition, the study only focusses on KASU library leadership and subordinate only, it can be applied to other institutions in Nigeria and beyond.

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