

Leadership Styles and Attitude to Work in Formal Organizations: A Study of Universities in South-South Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined leadership styles and attitude to work in formal organizations: A study of universities in South-South Nigeria. Two specific objectives and hypotheses were formulated for the study. The contingency and situational leadership theory was used to support the argument in the study. The cross sectional design was used for the study. The sample of 400 was derived from the population of 8054. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument with a reliability score of 0.59. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics such as mean and inferential statistics using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine or establish the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variable in the study. The study revealed that autocratic leadership style does not elicit favourable attitude from workers toward work in Nigerian universities. The study also found that bureaucratic leadership style does not improve workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities. The study recommended that autocratic system of leadership should be discouraged from use in modern organisations as it has the capacity to de-motivate workers as established from the findings of the study. It also recommended that bureaucratic leadership style should be used in situational context and not as the only method in use to elicit a favourable attitude from workers.*

KEYWORDS: Leadership style, Attitude, Work, Formal organization, University, South-South.

INTRODUCTION

Every organisation which is set up to achieve certain goals must have a leader and group of workers that drive the organization towards the realization of the set goals. Abun et al (2021) stated that leading people in an organisation is not just about influencing or motivating people through one's skills or knowledge, though it is important, it is not everything. According to Abun et al though they are needed, leadership involves more than risk-taking, strategy, action, and result. It also involves the right attitude toward the problems, the work, the organisation, and the employees who are working for the organisation. Leader's attitude toward these things may influence the way how he or she deals with them. Leaders can have both positive and negative attitude and they influence his or her behaviour, the work, the organisation, and employees.

Stanwick and Stanwick (2020) stated that theory X and Y (Mc Gregor 1960) and Theory Z (Ouchi 1981) provides three different ways to view leadership attitude in organisations. The way one leads and manages also depend on how one view or perceive his or her employees. On the other hand, theory X view employees as lazy people who lack ambition, seeking security and economic need, and do not like work, and therefore they must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened with punishment. On the other hand, theory Y look at employees positively. This theory argues that work is just natural and therefore workers will exercise self-direction and are committed to achieving the objective (Mc Gregor, 1960). Generally, the benefit is a form of motivation for the employee to achieve the objectives. Unfortunately, theory Z on the other hand sees that employees are self-motivated to do their work and to achieve the objectives.

In all organizations including universities which are educational institutions, management is saddled with the objective to maintain the organised enterprise as an effective way by providing for the survival of the group until basic goals are reached continuously. As educational Institutions, they expressly pursue goals of disciplining the mind for the acquisition and pursuit of knowledge. The importance of workers in universities in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. They form part of the structure of the system of the university as they actually carry out the day-to-day functions that enable management to attain its set goals. Thus, workers' attitude is continually been shaped by the chances of promotion, good living and good career within their workplace. As long as there is considerable improvement in terms of wages and working conditions and particularly leadership style that is favourable to them; their support for management can be guaranteed. In the same manner, workers expects and would want to experience high level of job satisfaction, relating well with friends and colleagues at work, good working environment and involved in social clubs. But when these are lacking and there is no concerted effort on the part of management to make

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provision for them or provide reasonable explanations, workers are bound to develop cold feet in the process that may affect their attitude towards work. There has not been research conducted to analyse workers attitude within the university system in the South-South of Nigeria, and this paper addresses this vacuum in research.

Objectives of the Study

The paper therefore examined leadership styles and attitude to work in formal organizations: A study of universities in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Establish the relationship between autocratic leadership style and attitude of workers to work in Nigerian universities.
2. Ascertain whether there is a relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and how it may likely improve workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Research Hypotheses

1. Ho There is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian Universities.
2. Ho There is no relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian Universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Leadership.

The topic of leadership has generated excitement and interest since ancient times. Conventionally, when people think about leadership, images come to mind of powerful dynamic individuals who command victorious armies, shape the events of nations, develop religions, or direct corporate empires (Lussier, et al, 2007). However, there was sharp interest from the 20th century as researchers attempted to scientifically generate answers to many questions surrounding the mystery of leadership. Leadership today, is increasingly associated with the concept of team work, getting along with other people, stimulating and creating a vision which others can identify rather than command and control. The term leadership means different things to different people. Although no ultimate definition of leadership exists (Yukl, 2002), the majority of definitions of leadership reflect some basic elements, including “group”, “influence” and “goal. Okpara (2005) stated that leadership entails an unequal distribution of power between leader and group members. He argued that group members have power, but the leaders usually have more powers. Leaders are agent of change; persons who affect other people more than the other people’s act affect them. Fry

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(2003) shared this view when he stated that leadership has a use of leading strategy to offer inspiring motives and to enhance the staff's potential for growth and development in the organization. From these positions, leadership could be generally seen as an influence, the art or a process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals.

The foregoing notions imply that Leadership is a social process in which one person or group of persons in an organized group harnesses the knowledge, skills and motivation of the other members in the attainment of the group goals. This process implies the consent-willing or grudging- of the group. According Okpara (2005), leadership is an important aspect of management. The ability to lead effectively is one of the keys to being an effective manager. This position was backed by Lussier et al (2007) when they posited that leadership is the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change.

Autocratic leadership style and employees attitude to work

This is also referred to as Authoritarian style. It is a style of leadership that is task driven. This style implies a high degree of task direction from the leader with minimum or no participation in decision making process on the part of the subordinates (Okpara, 2005). The autocratic leadership style is very often regarded as an old fashioned technique. It was a very popular style among managers commanding subordinates and it is still used around the world. This style basically comes natural to many leaders and brings many benefits, thus many managers start to lead using this style and try to improve it when pursuing their own leadership development. This style is used when leaders inform their employees what they want done and how they want it attained, without being advised by their followers. Furthermore when leaders are short on time, they have all information needed to achieve a goal and employees are enthused, autocratic still is also common. Autocratic leaders insist on doing it all themselves. They have all the power, make all the decisions, and do not often tell anyone else about what they are doing. Okpara (2005) submitted that if you work for an autocratic leader, your job is usually to do what you are told.

An autocratic leader often maintains his authority by force, intimidation, threats, reward and punishment, or position. Although he may or may not have a clear vision, and may or may not be steering the organization in the right direction, he is not concerned with whether anyone else agrees with what he is doing or not. Autocratic leadership style allows quick decision-making, and eliminates arguments over how and why things get done. At the same time, however, it may reduce the likelihood of getting a range of different ideas from different people, and can treat people badly,

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or as if they do not matter. If, as is often true, the leader is concerned with his own power and status, he will be looking over his shoulder, and moving to squelch any opposition to him or his ideas and decisions. Innovation or the use of others' ideas is only permissible if it's part of the leader's plan.

Bureaucratic Leadership

Bureaucratic leadership is one of the styles postulated (Max Weber in 1947). It is a system of management whereby employees are made to follow specific rules and lines of authority created by the superiors. In other words, these set of leaders function based on official regulations fixed by higher authorities within the organization is the leadership style which was develop the bureaucratic leadership pattern focuses on the administrative needs an organization has. Teams and departments of various private and public sector employ this system of management. But it is used mostly in the public sector, which relies heavily on consistency and adherence to rules and regulations to get whatever results they seek. On other side its advantage are, its reduce favouritism from the equation and it's centralize duties and roles within a team also in term of disadvantage its can be a challenge to increase productivity also it doesn't offer freedom for creativity.

There are other number of different approaches or styles to leadership and management that are based on different assumptions and theories. Usually, the style that leaders use will be based on a combination of their beliefs, values and preferences, as well as the organizational culture and norms which will encourage some styles and discourage others. This created a different view, popularized by James MacGregor (Burns, 1978). He contrasts two styles of leadership: transactional and transformational. In other words, the concept of leadership may be simplified using existing categorizations. One of these is the distinction between transactional and transformational leaders.

Pattern of Employee Attitude and Behaviour

Employee behaviours are pattern of actions and interactions of member of an organization that directly or indirectly affect its effectiveness (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Employees demonstrate a wide variety of positive and negative behaviour in the course of carrying out their duties. The form of employees' behaviour and attitude examined by this study are absenteeism and job satisfaction

Absenteeism

Absenteeism is an employee's intentional or habitual absence from work. Absenteeism has a huge cost and disruption to an organization. It is obviously difficult for an organization to operate smoothly and to attain its objectives if employees fail to report to their jobs. While employers expect workers to miss a certain number of workdays each year, excessive absences can equate to decreased productivity and can have a major effect on company finances, morale and other factors. This article on absenteeism examines the nexus between leadership style and absenteeism, as well as taking a look at the causes of absenteeism, the costs of lost productivity and what employers can do to reduce absenteeism rates in the workplace.

The first place where most businesses notice the impact of absenteeism is on their bottom line. This is significant. According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) companies lose approximately 2.8 million workdays a year. On any given day, between 3 and 6 percent of the workforce is absent. Most businesses overstaff to compensate for those absences. The reasons for absences range from family issues to workplace injuries. The BLS says almost 2/3 of unscheduled absences have to do with illness and family issues. The others are due to personal needs, stress and workplace injuries (Sanders, 2014).

In addition to impacting a company's financial status and productivity, absenteeism affects company moral. When workers see their colleagues frequently out of work and perceive them as shirking responsibility, it has a negative impact on the workplace. In varying degrees, this presents other management issues for the leader to tackle. The more time a leader focuses on resolving absenteeism and related issues, the less time he has to address other company issues.

Theoretical Framework

Contingency theory as one of the theory in leadership was developed by Fielder in mid 1960 but published in (Fieder, 1967). It examines leaders in conjunction with the situation the leader is in. It is contingent upon a match between the leader's style and the work situation. This is the theory on leadership which provides that the effectiveness of leadership is determined by the existing relationship between personal characteristics of a leader and the aspects of the situation. The assumption of the theory is that, the relationship between leadership style and organizational outcomes is moderated by situational factors. These factors identified are those related to environment. Thus, as per the views from this theory, the outcomes of an organization cannot be determined by leadership style but rather, the existing situation (Cheng and Chan, 2002). The

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theory further entails that effectiveness of leadership requires leaders to adopt certain leadership style which matches with the existing situational analysis. Situational leadership theory argues that any leader can work best in any environment by changing their style accordingly.

The theory is related to the study to be undertaken as it shows how leadership style can have an influence of performance of employees. Organizational outcomes are contributed by employees working in such particular organization. This means that, the extent to which leadership style influence the performance of employees depend on the existing situation. The environments in which a leader exists have as influence on leadership style which has selected. This in turn leads to effects on performance of employees who in turn affects the overall performance of an organization.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design that is adequate for this study is the cross sectional design that makes use of survey method to sample the views, opinions and attitude of respondents towards the leadership style of selected Nigerian universities and how it affects workers attitude to work. The target population of the study comprises of selected Federal, state and private universities in Delta and Bayelsa States which is 8054. The sample size of the study was obtained with the aid of Taro Yamane formula that was used to derive a sample of 400 from the population. This study employed the questionnaire in collecting data from the respondents of this study. The validity of the instruments was done through expert review. Two experts in research (Statisticians) and the supervisors examined the questionnaire. To ensure efficient reliability of the instruments, a pilot test was carried out using 40 respondents drawn from two (2) selected Universities different from the study area. Cronbach alpha was used to analyse the results obtained to determine the reliability coefficient and the result calculated is $r = 0.59$. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics such as mean and inferential statistics using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine or establish the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variable in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation

The table above shows that 95% of the questionnaires were retrieved and 5% were not returned.

This section presents the distribution of respondents' socio demographic characteristics.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage	
Sex	Male	225	61.8
	Female	139	38.2
	Total	364	100.0
Age	20-30	79	21.70
	31-40	135	37.10
	41-50	94	25.8
	51 years and above	56	15.4
	Total	364	100.0
Marital status	Single	58	15.9
	Married	267	73.3
	Divorced	26	7.1
	Widow(er)	13	3.7
	Total	364	100.0
Educational qualification	School certificate	18	4.9
	First degree/HND	252	69.2
	Higher degree	94	25.8
	Total	364	100.0
Status in the university	Administration staff	75	20.6
	Teaching staff	94	25.8
	Non-teaching staff	195	53.6
	Total	364	100.0
Years spent working in the university	Less than 5 years	42	11.5
	6-10 years	88	24.2
	11-15 years	84	23.1
	16-20 years	116	31.9
	21 years and above	34	9.3
Total	364	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table 4.1 show that males made up 61.8 percent of those who took part in the poll, while females made up 28.2 percent. This indicates that more males took part in the survey. Also, according to

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the age distribution of the respondents, those aged 31 to 40 had the highest percent with 37.10, those aged 20 to 30 had 21.70 percent, those aged 41-50 had 25.8 percent and those 51 years and above had 15.4 percent. This indicated that respondents aged 31 to 40 engaged more in the poll. Furthermore, the table shows that married people participated more in the survey with 73.3 percent, singles had 15.9 percent, divorced persons had 7.1 percent and widow(ers) had 3.7 percent. Educational qualification of the respondents revealed that 4.9 percent of the respondents have school certificate, 69.2 percent have first degree/HND and 25.8 percent of them have higher degree. This means that majority of the respondents have first degree/HND. The status of the respondents in the university system revealed that 20.6 percent of them are admin staff, 25.8 percent are teaching staff and 53.6 percent are non-teaching staff. This indicates that majority of the respondents belong to non-teaching staff caliber. Also, the table shows that 11.5 percent of the respondents have spent less than 5 years working in the universities, 24.2 percent have between 6-10 years work experience, 23.1 have between 11-15 years work experience, 31.9 percent of them have between 16-20 years work experience and 9.3 percent of the respondents have spent over 21 years working in the universities.

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Hi: There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Table 4.2. Pearson test for the relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities

Variables	r-Cal	df	r-Crit	P-value
autocratic leadership style				
workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities	0.887	362	0.897	.010
				N = 364

Source: Fieldwork, 2022 (Significant Level: $p < 0.05$)

Table 4.2 show the test of significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities. The test result shows that the r calculated value of 0.887 was less than the r critical value of 0.897, with a probability value of 0.010 and a degree of freedom of 352. The statistics reveals that the null hypothesis is retained while the alternate hypothesis is

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rejected. This implies that there is no significant positive relationship between autocratic leadership style and workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Hypothesis two

Ho: There is no relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Hi: There is a relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

Table 4.3: Pearson test for the relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian universities

Variables	r-Cal	Df	r-Crit	P-value
Bureaucratic leadership style				
The likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian universities	0.542	362	0.855	0.011
				N = 364

Source: Fieldwork, 2022 (Significant Level: $p < 0.05$)

Table 4.3 shows the test of significant relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the tendency for workers to improve favourably to work in Nigerian universities. The test result shows that the r calculated value of 0.542 is less than the r critical value of 0.855, with a probability value of 0.011 and a degree of freedom of 362. The statistics reveals that the null hypothesis is retained. This implies that there is no significant relationship between bureaucratic leadership style and the likelihood for workers to improve on a favourable attitude to work in Nigerian universities.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The first finding revealed that there is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership and workers attitude to work. This finding is in line with previous works carried out by Okpara (2005) who stated that the leadership style involves high degree of task direction from the leader with minimum or no participation in decision making process on the part of the subordinates (Okpara, 2005). The autocratic leadership style is very often regarded as an old fashioned technique. This style is used when leaders inform their employees what they want done and how they want it attained, without being advised by their followers. Okpara (2005) submitted that if

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you work for an autocratic leader, your job is usually to do what you are told as the finding of the study revealed.

The work of Kagwiria (2016) support the finding of the study as it revealed that power is concentrated in the hands of the leader who makes all the decisions, provides direction and assigns the task to subordinates. Men and Stacks (2013) arguing in the same vein stated that autocratic leaders are charismatic and self-assured individuals who typically do not require validation from their followers. Autocratic leaders use their position to pursue aggressive and visionary goals and their power through organization culture, press and media to praise their initial success.

The second hypothesis tested revealed that bureaucratic leadership style has the potential to improve workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities. This finding is in agreement with the work of (Gastil, 2012), who argued that this leadership style is premised on organizational structure and hierarchy. The leader's authority and acceptability stem from the position held within the organization. This type of leadership is based on formalized hierarchical leadership structures; leadership authority, scope and practice are all founded within the organizational construct. This leadership style is best suited to organizations such as banks, hospitals, professional services firms, etc. where a certain level of control, checks and balances is required to moderate leadership actions and behavior to militate against tyrannical leadership and abuse of power. This style is also effective where employees carry out routine jobs.

Michael (2010) argues that in bureaucratic leadership, it is the policies that drive execution, strategy, objectives and outcomes in the organization. He stressed further that since bureaucratic leaders are usually committed to procedures and processes instead of people (employees), they often times appear aloof and are highly averse to change. Swarup (2013) pointed out that bureaucratic leadership style can be effective when: employees are performing routine tasks over and over again, employees need to understand certain standards or procedures, employees are working with dangerous or delicate equipment that requires a definite set of procedures to operate, safety or security training is being conducted, and employees are performing tasks that require handling cash. He noted further that bureaucratic leadership can be ineffective when: work habit forms are hard to break, especially if they are no longer useful, employees lose their interest in their jobs and in their fellow workers, and employees are complacent to organizational policies and standards. The overriding implication of bureaucratic style of leadership in organization is that it ignores the benefits of the leader to motivate and develop employees, since policies are simply inadequate to the task of motivating and developing employees' commitment in workplace.

CONCLUSION

- i. The study established that autocratic leadership style does not elicit favourable attitude from workers toward work in Nigerian universities. This implies that autocratic leadership style has a negative impact on workers as it is authoritative in nature and does not give room to employees to participate in decisions that affect their wellbeing. This shows that it is not a good type of leadership to employ in the university system as it does not fit modern organisations.
- ii. Lastly, this study concludes that bureaucratic leadership style does not improve workers attitude to work in Nigerian universities. This is because the leadership style is rigid and works with a chain of command where workers are given instruction on what to do. It follows laid down rules and does not give room for working outside of the specified laid down order in the organisation.

Recommendations

- Autocratic system of leadership should be discouraged from use in modern organisations as it has the capacity to de-motivate workers as established from the findings of the study. This being that it rests decision making mainly in the hands of few members of leadership. This way force or coercion may be needed sometimes to get workers to perform their duty that in the long run does not produce a good output.
- Bureaucratic leadership style has its merits and demerits in modern organisations and therefore should be applied in situations where the need arises. Some of the elements of bureaucratic leadership like technical expertise and specialisation as well as impersonality should be encouraged as they have the capacity to produce positive impact on workers when deployed. But the rigidity and hierarchical chain of command that puts authority at the top down to the bottom discourages and demotivate employees. Thus they should be discouraged in application as they have the potential to produce negative attitude from workers.

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