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Rigid Bureaucratic Leadership in Inter-Agency Collaboration Under Institutional Uncertainty: Assessing Its Influence on Labour Relations and Employee Expectations

John Oghenekevwe Ifaka[1], Victor Moday Omeonyekwule[2], Aziegbemhin S. Ikhayere[3]
Department of Political Science and Public Administration,
College of Management and Social Sciences,
Glorious Vision University
Edo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: *The study is focused on the challenges of rigid bureaucratic leadership management of labour relations and employees' expectations in public interagency collaboration during a period of uncertainty. The objective of the study is to examine how rigid bureaucratic leadership influence labour relations and unmet employees' expectations within the interagency collaboration in Delta State, Nigeria. The study deployed a quantitative research design using survey data collected from 234 valid respondents. A descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares regression techniques were for the analysis. The finding revealed that a high level of uncertainty was consistently reported among the respondents, while rigid bureaucratic leadership and employees' expectations were moderate, and labour relations remain weak. The study concluded that labour relations and employees' expectations are influenced by complex interactions of multiple factors in interagency collaboration. The study recommended adoption of adaptive leadership practices that are flexible, inclusive, participatory, and fair to adjust to uncertainty.*

Keywords: bureaucratic leadership, employee expectations, industrial labour relations, institutional uncertainty, inter-agency collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Developing countries are constrained by mounting challenges requiring government agencies to cooperate (interagency collaboration) in addressing complex problems, especially where resources are scarce. The competing demands required by government are directed to public institutions that are design to implement public policy and deliver services. When interagencies at a horizontal level of government collaborate by aligning resources (human and material), cost is reduce and efficiency is improve, since

less is spent for achieving more. However noble, organisational dynamics may undermine the benefits of interagencies collaboration (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Qvist, 2016).

The classical bureaucracy by design is rigid rigidity and observe strict hierarchical rule based structure, exclusionary decision making process and command communication syste. The rigid structure informed an inflexible leadership style that is authocratic and tend to weaken employees motivation, communication and labour relations. These bureaucratic tendercies hinders innovation, resource and information exchange, and weaken collaboration across intending agencies (Cross et al., 2013; Ntale et al., 2020). Employees initiatives are constrained by hierarchical distancing and enforcement of procedures (Mavrot & Hadorn, 2023; Qvist, 2016), and their expectation related to compensation, recognition, fairness, equity and working conditions are subjected allowed participation. Where this is severe, dissatisfaction occurs frequently and organisation's commitment is lowred. (Machura, 2016; Prilleltnsky, 2019).

Labour relations is an intriger part of orgsnisation form. Labour union attend to dual function (acting as a facilaitators for communication and mediator in resolving dispute that bothers on employees compensation and employment conditions (Coleman & Rouzier, 2019; Fine, 2017; Marchington et al., 2009). The interagency programme requires institutional trust, reciprocity, and shared norms to succeed but this can be limited by political interference, cultural differences, and interagency rivalry (Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Plimmer et al., 2023; Williamson & Roles, 2023).

Examining the intersections of bureaucraticy dynamics, rigid leadership, employement expectation and labour union dual mandates, provides a tool for understanding collaborative governance and institutional performances in a developing country where service delivery and community welfare are presistely low.

The objective of the study is to examine how bureaucratic leadership rigidity impacts labour relations and employees' expectations in the context of the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission during the period of uncertainty. The study seeks to contribute to the body of literature on interagency collaboration, network governance, and labour relations as a critical element in framing effective service delivery for neglected communities, expecting an effective governance mechanism to offer optimised outcomes.

The rest of the article is organised across four sections, with the immediate section focusing on (1) *literature review* comprising conceptual foundation (of bureaucratic leadership, labour relations, employee expectations, and inter-agencies collaboration), theoretical review, empirical review, gap in literature and theoretical framework. Other sections are (2) methodology, which explores descriptive and regression analysis, a discussion that interprets the results, (3) conclusion and (4) policy implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Foundation

Rigid bureaucratic leadership in public organisations is characterised by

hierarchical authority, respect for formal rules, regulations, and procedures, impersonality of personnel administration, and a centralised decision-making structure and downward communication pattern reflected in order giving within the public institution. The emerging leadership style is in a strict sense, goal oreinted, command order and loyalty, and disregard emloyees engagement in decision making (Ntale et al., 2020).

Several studies on public organisations reveal that command leadership structure and extreme bureaucratic controls regularly wane collaborative behaviours across public institutions since they limit employees to an inflexible reporting structure and rule-based procedures (Ntale et al., 2020; Gron, 2025; Mavrot & Hadorn, 2023). Net governance provisions involve flexibility, participatory communication, and an inclusive problem-solving template among contributing agencies. In network governance, there are two kinds of partners (lead and support agencies). The lead agencies provide most of the resources for the project, while the support agencies take charge of the project. The goal is to join a partnership to enhance optimised service delivery in difficult situations or periods of uncertainty. When leadership structure in the lead organisation remains inflexible, communication strictly flows downward, employees' engagement in the collaboration becomes passive, particularly in an evolving and uncertain environment with complex institutional demands (Oswalt & Marzan, 2018; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Goldsmith et al., 2002).

Labour relations and employees' expectations are vital aspects of human resource management that attend to organisational conditions reflected in meeting the demands of employees through leadership, an organised leadership practise that induces collaborative outcomes. Labour relations demote the institutional contacts and interactions between management and employee representatives (particularly labour unions) that mediate workplace conditions and negotiate employment conditions. Employees' expectations are inherently the drivers that inform the needs of employees to gain fair compensation, promotion opportunities, recognition, inclusive participation in work design and conditions, and organisational support for growth. Dissatisfaction of employees intensifies when these expectations are not given attention or when issues related to them are unresolved(Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Machura, 2016; Williamson & Role, 2023).

Several studies on collaborative work environments demonstrated that employees' unmet expectations can ignite undesirable attitudes and reinforce withdrawal of commitment among employees to actively participate in inter-agency collaboration initiatives (Cross et al., 2013; Plimmer et al., 2023; Rigg & O'Mahony, 2013). In an organisation where labour unions are active, their ability to engage and interact with management can either be mitigated if attended to or intensify the dynamics when ignored. This principally depends on the leadership style (flexible or inflexible) and the legitimacy of labour unions as partners in organisational governance (McCarthy, 2029; Fine, 2017; Oswalt & Marzan, 2018).

When multiple agencies pursue joint policy initiatives to address complex problems beyond their individualised domain and capabilities, shared resources, trust, power sharing, resource dependence, communication channels, and administrative cooperation are crucial irreducible determinants (Wang & Ran, 2023). In this context, where lead agencies provide much of the human and material resources in the

partnership, the lead agency often shapes the tone of effective collaboration since its employees are inherently engaged in driving the capability of the operations in the created network. In the case of DESOPADEC, which is saddled with development interventions in oil-producing areas in Delta State, sustained internal collaboration with other Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) is a prerequisite. Rigid bureaucratic leadership in the lead agency offers labour unions the quest for resistance, which implies deteriorating relations between labour and management over employees' grievances based on unmet expectations. This consequently affects relational trust for the labour union and weakens motivation for employees.

In the context of this, bureaucratic leadership is conceptualised as an independent variable functionally influencing labour relations and employees' unmet expectations as dependent variables, while uncertainty stands as a control variable. The interaction of the independent variable on the dependent variables will shape and inform the effectiveness of the inter-agency collaboration during the period of uncertainty.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical review explores insights from several theoretical lenses to shape our understanding of inter-agency collaboration and network governance during a period of uncertainty. The theories explored are network governance theory, social exchange theory and bureaucratic polarisation theory. These theories explore divergent perspectives in understanding the context under which it acted as the lead agency to implement the interagency collaboration between 2016 and 2020.

Notwork Governance

Network governance theory is a primary framework for explaining inter-agency collaboration in the public sector. The network of partnership creates a system of coordination that induces resource sharing, trust, empathy, and communication among multiple agencies. Empirical studies show that collaborative networks entail boundary spanning roles designed to link various agencies or institutions to ease information sharing and exchange with an inclination for conflict reduction among organisational actors (Fox & Cooper, 2013; Cross et al., Colman & Rouzies, 2019).

Irrespective of this, the network governance structure is inclined to inclusive participation and sensitive to social bonding. Inflexible bureaucratic leadership, while excluding employee participation, imposes rigid hierarchical control and encourages downward flow of information; all of these stimulate a decline in the collaborative capacity of organisations. Empirical studies reflected that hierarchical decision-making structure concern to high power distance relations, which are inherently adherent to strict administrative rules, persistently weakening cooperation between participating agencies because employees assigned to collaborative tasks are constrained by rigid rules and procedures (Ntale et al., 2020; Qvist, 2016; Marrot & Hadrot, 2023).

Social Exchange

Social exchange theory is focused on relational practise embedded in collaborative governance arrangements involving bureaucratic leadership and employee engagement. The theory proposes that organisational success is built on reciprocal exchange between management and employees. Management commitment to employee treatment is based on perceived trust, fairness, and recognition that, in return, induces employee loyalty, positive work behaviour that reinforces organisational productivity and performance. In an organisation where employees experience a lack of recognition, poor communication and exclusion from the decision-making process, engagement significantly reduces, affecting organisational goals.

Research in public sector institutions revealed that employee satisfaction and apparent organisational support play a significant role in influencing collaborative behaviour and inter-agency cooperation (Machura, 2016; Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Plimmer et al., 2023). When employees become dissatisfied because of unmet expectations in the organisation, this dampens employees' morale and causes withdrawal in efforts, resistance to organisational initiatives and the development of a negative attitude that spreads across the collaborative networks. As with DESOPADEC, unmet expectations are related to delayed promotion, politicalisation of compensation and welfare benefits, and suspension of annual bonus counting for a decade.

Bureaucratic polarisation

Bureaucratic polarisation theory deepens the understanding of public sector agencies with protective internal interests. The theory indicates that different agencies view others as rivals and would internally protect the in-group interest against competing external groups even when they serve the same government. The in-group interest of a public agency is essential to attract and retain resources rather than share similar resources with other agencies in a collaborative arrangement. This divisive behavioural disposition intensifies inter-agency rivalry rather than accelerates cooperation in the public network design to foster cooperation. This creates intergroup conflict as different agencies are pretentious of collaboration. The intergroup conflict propels behavioural disposition towards fragmentation of interest and governance systems that underutilise public resources, delay implementation of policy as quality time is spent outsmarting rivals rather than harnessing coordination of multiple agencies for the benefits of the public (Guedes-Neto, 2025; Mavrot & Hadorn, 2023; Aiken & Bode, 2009; Ifaka, 2019).

In the context of bureaucratic leadership, which is inflexible and decision-making is exclusive to accommodate labour unions, polarisation becomes intensified because employees and labour unions are dissuaded from engagement and would essentially lose the morale and tenacity to cooperate with external agencies when, in actual reality, they have been internally estranged. Both employees and the labour union feel disconnected and may have little information about the whole picture of what is actually happening in their organisation. A collaborative network is incapacitated with employees who lack information to

share or a weakened trust to build collaboration that diminishes their morale and undercuts their expectations.

Theory synchronisation

Collectively, these theories manifest in different dimensions in observing rigid bureaucratic leadership influence on labour relations and bureaucratic expectation in inter-agency collaboration in times of uncertainty. Network governance predisposes the condition where relational coordination or social capital is expressed across multiple organisations or agencies. Social exchanges mirror bureaucratic leadership behaviour as a reflection of employees and labour union commitment to cooperation, while bureaucratic polarisation essentially typifies the tension created by different agencies in pursuing seperatist interest rathan than the collective agenda of government to deliver quality public service. These theories are divergent reflections of several outcomes that can readily explain the DESOPADEC challenges in operating inter-agency collaboration in Delta State, where underserved communities are hoping for timely intervention.

Empirical Review

The central claim of rigid bureaucratic leadership that prioritises central authority decision-making capability, adherence to a hierarchical rule-based command system, and exclusive tendencies often restricts collaborative engagement among employees. Traditional bureaucratic organisations are sensitive to hierarchical expression of centralise power driven dominance against the flexibility required for inter-agency cooperation. The bureaucracy is technically designed for control and dominance of employees and labour unions by taking effective hold of strict rules, regulations and procedures. These infexible control overwhealms employees and labour union against critical expectation that when unrealised causes withdrawal from commitment. Control also comes with exclusivity that reduce particiaption, which signifies that where there is no involvement by participation, little is known and much information cannot be shared or exchanged with other agencies. Cooperation is premised based on exposure to information and decisions characterised by inclusive participation (Ntale et al., 2020; Gron, 2025; Marvrot & Hadron, 2023).

Supporting evidence to this claim is linked to survey and case study research that examined collaborative governance initiatives in public agencies. Their finding buttresses that where rigid leadership with central commanding power is distanced from employees and excluded from the decision-making process, implementing such a decision becomes problematic as a result of disorganisation or biased influence. Employees who operate a system of networked tasks have the inclination to determine what can be done and how well it can be achieved (Ntale et al., 2022; Gron, 2025; Lagowska et al., 2022; Lipsky, 2010).

Studies oriented towards network organisation in the public service showed that collaborative governance needs boundary spanning interactions to aid participants in integrating beyond their institutional units, exploring technical capability, exchanging and sharing information across organisation network (Cross et al., 2013; Fox & Cooper, 2013).

The warrant for this claim is that employees with limited access to decision-making-making and strict adherence to rules and procedures lack the prerequisitete discretion needed to engage other actors from other agencies. A qualifier to this claim rests on the fact that hierarchy and rigid leadership are not primarily adverse toe to collaboration, especially when the leadership approval of inter-agency design is a strategic move to provide change and optimise resources. This indicates that bureaucratic leadership is driven by the persuasion to leverage employees broaden participation beyond internal rules and engagement (Gron, 2025; Cross et al., 2013). The criticism for rigid bureaucratic leadership still rests on the conviction that corresponding responsibilities require a proportional level of authority to act. Collaboration outside a given agency requires employees to act with anticipated autonomy within the created networks (Ntale et al., 2020; Marvot & Hadorn, 2023).

Looking at another set of evidence related to the impact of labour relations on collaborative governance arrangements, the core claim rests on the quality of labour and management governance compatibility towards network arrangement and effective collaboration. This shapes the level of trust and enhances communication at scales as a condition for inter-agency cooperation. Empirical evidence is gathered from qualitative and case study approaches that reveal labour unions act frequently as boundary spanning actors in facilitating communication between management and employees, and even across other agencies. The labour mediating role provides clarity for the conditions and context of the scope of participation in engendering cooperation between the internal and external units undergoing transition. The clarity role helps to reduce conflict and smooth the path to mutual existence for the common good (Colman & Rouzier, McCarthy, 2019).

Also, another important dimension revealed by empirical evidence is that labour unions govern the flow of communication to express how policy implementation affects employees' well-being and their ability to adapt to emerging circumstances. This organically strengthens the enforcement of the collaboration since grey areas are identified and addressed (Fine, 2017; Williamson & Roles, 2023). The warrant to this claim addresses the issue of representativeness in employees' involvement and engagement through negotiated mechanisms, which often facilitate trust and cooperation.

The qualifier to this claim is circumstantial, as labour unions are often predisposed to promote employees' interests that may conflict with management intentions or policy targets. Empirical evidence exposed concerns related to continuing disputes related to additional workscope without negotiated or agreed upon wages, job classifications, duration of the operation, and similar employment protection, as often those engaged in the collaborations are often posted in other locations other than their primary ones. When these contexts are not clarified, and measures for support and protection are ignored, the engagement leads to employees' vulnerability. This adequately becomes a source of tension that weakens collaborative initiatives if the grey areas are not addressed, especially when this constrain are imposed by rigid bureaucratic leadership (Marchington et al., 2009; Oswalt & Martzan, 2018). The criticism for this concern rests on the application of rigid bureaucratic leadership predisposition to impose conditions on employees'

engagement in collaborative programmes without the due constitution of labour union representation in the decision-making process.

Studies have also shown that employees may be optimistic in exploring newer opportunities and expanding exciting engagement in other agencies. This crave of excitement is driven by employees' expectations to reach the need for belongingness and add value to the organisation's goals (Prilleltensky, 2014). The core claim extracted from several studies implies that employees who are driven by the need for meaning and adding value to the organisation's goal, also seek security from injustice or unmet expectations, which reduces commitment to the cause of the collaboration. Several surveys of government employees revealed that dissatisfaction of compensation, recognition, and promotion opportunities often interfer with the willingness and commitment to add value to collaborative initiatives (Prilleltensky, 2014; Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Plimmer et al., 2023).

Even when employees are committed, surveys evidence in public sector organisations engaged in inter-agency collaboration showed that rigid bureaucratic leadership reinforces the propensity to expose employees to exploitation and these context when perceived by employees through indequate administrative support, expansion of workloads or constraining working conditions, inter-agencies collaborative task wane because these conditions prevent the employees with the tools to function effectively (Machura, 2016; Balaswamy, 2002).

Besides the formation of formal structures for inter-agency collaboration, informal networks erected may remain passive, but they become reinforced through regular interactions and feedback mechanisms to evaluate work conditions and formal objectives. When conflicts of interest are perceived regularly, dissatisfaction creates resentment rather than optimism for the tasks required to achieve the set objectives. The negative attitude fuels the need to undermine the success of the programme (Cross et al., 2013; Rigg & O'Mahony, 2013). The warrant for this claim points straight to support that collaborative governance relies on employees' motivation to act in the network to achieve set goals, but the qualifier to this claim is that some employees may be driven to participate in the context of dissatisfaction to meet their professional commitment or institutional duties. The conclusion to this is that empirical evidence indicates that pervasive unmet expectation overtime weakens morale from rigid bureaucratic leadership imposition, not concern with fairness and justice in appropriating the corresponding efforts of labour (Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Plimmer et all., 2023).

Another dimension worth noting is the complexity surrounding the interactions among rigid bureaucratic structure, labour relations, and employees' expectations, with an impact on the collaborative environment that is uncertain. Collaborative network and governance do not occur in normal organisational contexts. They are created to address pressing challenges beyond a singular organisation's capability. So the central claim for collaborative networks is to function effectively only when proposed organisational settings are stable to gain trust, driven by collective harmonised interest, open and transparent communication among actors. Data from comparative studies showed that fragmentation within institutions is driven by competing interests and the corresponding tensions they create often misalign intended governance

outcomes (Qvist, 2016; Aiken & Bode, 2009). Empirical analyses of cross-agency policy implementation showed that divergence of interest among actors propels inconsistencies towards fragmentation, which derails the collaborative initiatives from their original targets (Marvot & Harden; Guedes-Neto, 2025).

Also, studies conducted on inter-organisational projects revealed that collaboration often escalates into conflict roles when resources and responsibilities are not critical evaluate thorough consultative design engaging all stakeholders at the inception of the project. Stakeholders' commitment is critical since their interest is organically tied to trust and responsibilities that require ownership rather than biased appropriation driven by extrinsic motives (Dwivedi & Dwivedi, 2021; Emeka-Okoli et al., 2024; Vestola & Hedborg, 2025; Samzelius & Ulmestig, 2024). The warrant for this argument rests on the assumption that shared institutional commitment is driven by coordinated shared expectations of participating actors. A qualifier that directly connects to this is that the formal structure often obscures these challenges, while the rebuttal demonstrated from empirical studies affirmed that formal structure is solely inadequate to reconcile the contradictions inherent in rigid bureaucratic leadership imposing conditionalities where tense labour relations and employees' unmet expectations continue to persist (Wang et al., 2025; Romzek et al., 2014).

These empirical insights have demonstrated that rigid bureaucratic leadership creates a toxic work environment that strains labour relations and accelerates employees' unmet expectations, which can impact interagency collaborations and may threaten developmental intervention objectives.

Gaps in the literature

Interagency collaboration studies in the public sector have been extensively published, yet interactions of indicators exploring the dominants of rigid bureaucratic leadership on labour relations and employees' expectations are scarcely investigated in a single analytical framework within the context of neglected oil-producing areas, especially during periods of uncertainty.

While existing literature has shown that an organisation structure with rigid bureaucratic leaders and reinforced by a dominant rule-based command structure enables exclusive decision making that weakens public agencies' collaborative capabilities to function optimally (Ntale et al, 2020; McDonard et al., 2008; Vestola & Hedborg, 2025; Ifaka, 2021). Other studies also further expressed that unmet employees' expectations relating to job enrichment can undermine commitment and reduce reciprocity required to fuel a collaborative governance network to meet public needs (Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Machura, 2026; Cross et al., 2013). As this study aligns, other parallel evidence indicates that labour unions can play a dual role in intragencies collaboration. They can facilitate cooperation through recognition and effective participation reinforced by collective bargaining, or they intensify conflict when persuaded that employees' needs will be persistently ignored by rigid bureaucratic leadership that often seeks to impose working conditions (McCarthy, 2019; Colman & Rouzies, 2019). Previous analytical lens rests substantially on micro data analysis within an agency or institution, but at the governance level, scholarship has revealed that interagency rivalry and competition raise tensions. Bureaucratic polarisation

is another dimension that occurs with divisive interests and the divergent related fragmentation of implementation that isolates intention from actual results (Qvist, 2016; Marvot & Hardon, 2023; Guedes Neto, 2025.

Despite these extensive studies, the literature scarcely accommodates the infusion of rigid bureaucratic leadership, labour relations and employees' expectations as critical variables that collectively shape inter-agencies collaboration in the context of environmental uncertainty and resource constraints. Most evidence is largely extracted from human resources with subthemes connected to welfare administration, employment services, or western-informed settings of public sectors, but leaves a gap on how these dynamics are challenged in resource constrain institution in developing countries and neglected areas requiring government interventions. These gaps suggest the quest for urgent appeal to investigate the complex dynamics of rigid bureaucratic leadership, labour relations and employees' expectations in a developing country context requiring collaboration of interventionist institutions.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework deployed to explain the interactions between bureaucratic leadership with rigid hirarchical authorised decisoning making behaviour and other values inherent in active labour unions in the context of employees' unmet expectations under the interagency collaboration arrangement is the institutional theory and network governance theory. Their justification is embedded in the nature and characteristics of the public sector complex manifestations they seek to explain. Institutional theory serves as the main theory, and network governance theory is the complementary theory deployed in the context of this research.

The institutional theory

Institutional theory has evolved, leading to divergent explanations of what it means. Several contributors like John Mayer, Brian Rowan, Paul DiMaggio, Walter Powell, Richard Scott, Douglas North, and Acemoglu and James Robinson, among others, have linked institutional theory to development parameters. The theory has shaped organisational behaviour to explain how former rules, regulations and procedures interact with informal cultural values and norms. The core assumption of institutional theory is that it dispel that an organisation is only driven by bureaucratic efficiency. It addresses the need for legitimacy bounded by environmental values and expectations (Meyer et al., 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Leadership style that imposes rules, regulations and procedures must emanate from legitimacy. Compliance is recognised rather than demanded. The imposition of bureaucratic rigid leadership, command decision-making structure and top-down communication pattern exposed contradictions required from a collaborative inter-agency network that is inherently flexible. The operationalisation of bureaucratic technical, driven, efficient and the need for legitimacy, focusing on collaborative network building, is challenged by the DESOPADEC case when there is layered institutional pressure, political

oversight, administrative rules, labour regulations, and oil host community expectations in the context of uncertainty.

Institutional theory is relevant and offers justification by providing an explanation of the case study in several dimensions. First, institutional theory admits that bureaucratic rigidity is an inherent design to guarantee efficiency, and its persistence is natural in public agencies. Adaptive compliance is required to reinforce stability, but the challenge is that environmental constraints outside the control of the bureaucracy can necessitate collaboration for the sake of meeting development priorities. These external constraints create uncertainty beyond the maintenance of rigid structure and enforcement of rules, regulations and procedures.

Second, the institutional theory recognised that an organisation is made up of complex interactions beyond the formal structures. Even within the public organisational space, other actors without hierarchical authority also exert influence on the organisation's decision. Labour relations and union engagement are paramount to ensure that the collective bargaining system is reflect diversities of interests shaping alignment. The content of collective bargaining is reinforced by labour law that recognises labour unions as representatives of employees and the pursuit of their interests as legitimate claims when expressed in a democratic context that includes negotiation.

Third, institutional theory helps explain the logic of collaborative governance in inter-agency coordination. This creates the challenge of retaining bureaucratic mandate and identity while still struggling to collaborate to gain expanded priorities.

Looking at the DESOPADEC's context, the theory explains the public administration system in Nigeria with rigid leadership behaviour seeking to impose expanded working conditions on labour unions and employees without recourse to implementing a collective bargaining agreement and frequent disregard for employees' welfare. These constraints in turn affect the commission mandate to execute collaborative arrangements with ministries, local governments and host oil communities that have experienced prolonged marginalisation.

Network Governance

Network governance theory explains the context through which organisations come together to solve complex social problems beyond their institutional capability. Rigid adherence to institutional mandate and structure may allow significant challenges to persist and threats survival of diverse ecosystems (Ifaka, 2024). Sorensen and Torfing (2007) and Kling and Koppenjan (2014) argued that increasing demands are overwhelming for a single agency to resolve. New realities are becoming larger than organisational capability and mandate. This set the pace for reforms for co-productions of policy outcomes, requiring a network of stakeholders to collaborate and implement change. The core assumption of network governance theory is that multiple stakeholders in the public sector increasingly collaborate to enhance government capability to meet expanding public demands and the requisite capabilities to resolve them. This does not undermine bureaucratic efficiency, but it expands the scope for pooling together resources

that may be lying fallow in other agencies towards achieving collective interest. The outcome of the collaboration is dependent on the quality of interactions in the network and the efficient allocation of resources to meet this demand. Labour serves as input to this process, and the rationalisation of their interest in expanding values attends to the dynamics of engaging human agency in work organisation.

Also, the theory is embedded in prerequisite conditions that are essential in working out the collaborative arrangement through the governance of networks. These conditions are trust between organisations, collaborative leadership and coordination mechanism, shared goals and expectations, and mutual exchange of information and resources (Kim, 2020; Gatignon, 2022; Goldsmith et al., 2022; Cross et al., 2013; Hult, 2010).

Organisations work through people, and people are essential tools that wave organisation's plan into actional goals. Labour relations, employment conditions and employees' expectations are functional parts of the wheel that drive the organisational plan to the fruition of purpose. When organisations become rigid in a dynamic context, it inhibits flexibility for hierarchical control, while reducing participation for the expression of authority. This becomes counterintuitive to building trust and mutual stakeholders' commitment with the labour union and employees alike. The same people expected to cross-fertilise ideas and shape collaboration through the network are either constrained or alienated. Labour union constrain and employee dissatisfaction can weaken the enthusiasm require to drive external collaborations (Oswalt & Marzan, 2018; Balaswamy, 2002).

Applying the network governance theory to the DESOPADEC interventionist mandate exposes the interplay of stakeholders among public sector ministries and agencies, labour unions, and host communities. The explanatory power of the theory bears on reflecting the role of trust, interdependence, collective bargaining, and cooperation interacts with agency autonomy, bureaucratic rigidity and hierarchical control. These contradictions are resolved within stakeholders' engagement and commitment to delivering quality public service, or the agencies are portrayed as a tool for state capture that labour and employees should negotiate with or resist.

The integration of institutional theory and network governance theory provides the intersections of dynamism reflected in inter-agency collaborations. The framework collective reveal and explains the structural, relational and collaborative dimensions of public sector management simultaneously. It emphasises rigid bureaucratic leadership as a core characteristic of administrative structure, labour relations and employees' expectations as reinforcing dynamics shaping internal institutional operations of public sector organisations, interagency collaboration as outcomes reflected in shaping network governance performance, and external environmental uncertainty that shapes these interactions. It positions the organisation in an uncertain period to be reactive rather than proactive.

METHODOLOGY

The study deployed a quantitative research design utilising the survey technique to examine the impact of rigid bureaucratic leadership on labour relations and employees' expectations in inter-agency

collaboration during a period of uncertainty. The survey design is an appropriate research tool that is designed to collect systematic and representative opinions, perceptions and experiences from a designated population (Nachmias et al., 2015; Odion et al., 2025). The empirical setting of the study is Delta State, and DESOPADEC represented the lead agency engaged in the inter-agency collaborations. The study occurred between 2016 and 2020 (two instances of recession), where state financial posture was pressured to undertake robust interventionist demands in the oil producing aeas of Delta State.

Though as lead agencies, DESOPADEC provided financial and human resources to support the Post Primary Education Board (PPMB), the Ministry of Justice, the Delta State Traffic Management Agency and the Ministry of Transport. 1300 staff were redeployed to these agencies from DESOPADEC to participate in different interagency collaboration programmes during this period. This study is essentially focused on the activities of PPEB and DESTMA following the survey's core assumption that the whole population, when large, should be broken into representative parts for a cost-effective study. Of the 1300 staff, 1001 were deployed to PPMB and DESTMA.

Total number of staff deployed to PPEB (from level 7 to 17 {Senior/management staff}) = 402
Total number of staff deployed to DESMA (level 1 to 6 junior staff) = 599
Total number (Sample population) = 1001

The targeted population constitute approximately 77% of the staff engaged in the interagency collaboration across four state agencies. Using Taro Yami's formula with a parameter set at 5% level of precision, 286 respondents were derived. Afterwards, extending proportional representation of the two agencies designated for the study, 115 respondents were assigned to PPEB and 171 respondents to DESTMA. The study further deployed a cluster sampling approach to distribute respondents across the 19 oil-producing local government areas of Delta State. 10 local governments were purposefully selected to reflect diversity to represent cultural diversity and geographical balance using senatorial districts in the states. 3 senatorial districts were assigned 3 local governments, with an additional local government reserve for Delta Central, which has the highest population and staff strength in the commission.

The data obtained were subjected to multiple regression analysis to examine the impact of bureaucratic leadership on labour relations and employees' unmet expectations during the period of uncertainty in the interagency collaboration programme. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), which facilitated the systematic evaluation of the relationship among the variables were empirically tested.

Model Specification:

The model specification is represented as Labour relations and Employees' Expectations = f (Rigid Bureaucratic Leadership, Institutional Uncertainty)

While the linear regression equation is

$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RL_i + \beta_2 U_i + \beta_3 (RL_i \times U_i) + \varepsilon_i$

Where:
Y_i = represent combined index of labour relations and employees' expectations

β_0 = symbolize the constant term representing the expected level of Labour Relations and Employees' Expectation when the explanatory variable is zero.

RL_i = represents Rigid Leadership (Independent variable) within a bureaucratic hierarchical structure in interagency collaboration.

U_i = represent Institutional Uncertainty (control variable), reflecting the operating environment in the interagency collaboration.

$(RL_i \times U_i)$ symbolises the interactions that capture if Rigid Leadership influences Labour Relations and Employees' Expectation.

$\beta_1, \beta_{2, \text{and}} \beta_3$ represent the estimated parameters measuring direct and conditional effects of the explanatory variable.

ε_i = represent the error term capturing unobserved factors

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Uncertainty	79.1728	3.91687	243
Leadership style	31.2914	3.38799	243
Employees unmet expectations	31.0947	4.92540	243
Industrial labour relations	28.5432	3.09111	243

Table 1 presented a descriptive statistics that characterized the derived respondents for the study. The descriptive statistics presented measure variables among uncertainty (held constant), bureaucratic leadership, labour relations and empoyees unmet expectations. The desriptive statistics provided empiral support for the centrality of the arguement that uncertain organizational environment and bureaucratic leadership rigidity influence labour relations and employees' expections outcomes. The result indicated that uncertainty recorded the highest central tendency (M=79.17) with a reltively low dispersion (SD=3.92). The result demostate strong and constituent observation of the respondents that the operational environment had strong uncertainty or instability. The industrial labour relations by constrast reported the lowest mean (M=28.54) and standard deviation corresponding to moderate mean score of (SD=3.09). The

rigid bureaucratic leadership style revealed (M=31.29 and SD=3.39). The moderate position of leadership style implied a comparative weaker posture experienced by labour in the interagency arrangement.

Unmet employees expectations capturing (M=31.09 and SD=4.93) also occupied a moderate position as leadership style. The stronger moderate variability of employees unmet expectation indicated the greater variability (inconstitency) in how staff experience organisational support and diverse fullfillment in the interagency collaboration programme. The weak posture of labour relations indicate fragile relations between the commission board and labour union underscoring poor dialogue and weaker engagement in decision making and communication pattern while strongly expressing a constitent pattern of unsettled concerns connected to limited organizational support, welfare and deployment conditions. Consequently the decriptive statistics result exposed the conditional pattern with empirical validation that a strong uncertain institutional environment coincided with uneven employee expectations at moderate level and produce a comparatively weaker labour relations posture. This pattern reflected in the mean and standard deviation reinforce the study hypothesis that rigid bureaucratic leadership practice within the context of strong uncertainty may influence labour relations and shape employees' expectations with the interagency collaboration arrangement coordinated by DESOPADEC.

Regression Analysis

Table 2: Least Squares Estimation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.117	4.408		6.151	.000
	Rigid Leadership Style	.053	.056	.061	.948	.344

Dependent Variable: industrial labour relations and employees' expectations

The result in Table 2 showed the least square estimation examining the impact of rigid bureaucratic leadership style on industrial relations and employees' expectations captured in the interagency collaboration framework. While the regression coefficient is positive (B = 0.053, SE = 0.056; β = 0.061), with expressing meaning indicates that an increase in rigid bureaucratic leadership is correlated with a marginal increase in labour relations and employees' expectations. The t value (0.948) and p value (p=.344) implied that the relationship is not statistically significant. The explanation in practical terms relates that the observation may be randomly assumed, other than other factors accounting for meaningful changes in the interagency relations arrangement. The pattern suggests that a bureaucratic leadership style that is rigid does not, as a factor, singularly or substantially influence employees' expectations and labour

relations within the interagency collaboration. Though the baseline indicates significance at ($B = 27.117$, $p < .001$), within the context of DESOPADEC interagency collaboration, the variations in labour relations and employees' expectations are marginally influenced by rigid bureaucratic leaders as a singular characteristic of the bureaucratic theory.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Drawn from the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, the results indicated a high level of uncertainty, a moderate level of rigid bureaucratic leadership style and employees' expectations, while industrial labour relations had a weak level expressed in the mean scores. However, the variability for all variables was moderate except for employees' expectations, which showed a strong moderate level of variability among the respondents. This pattern implied that employees' observations were driven by divergent experiences within the interagency arrangement. Also, the result from the descriptive statistics exposed the salient operation environment (strong), and leadership rigidity was a constituent in shaping work conditions dynamics.

Similarly, Table 2 accounted for regression analysis of the study and revealed that rigid bureaucratic leadership was positive but not statistically significant in influencing labour relations and employees' expectations. The result indicates leadership alone does not meaningfully predict changes in labour relations and employees' expectations in the interagency collaboration. The result challenged the classical bureaucratic theory that suggests leadership behaviour directly influences employees' performance and satisfaction (Baekgaard et al., 2023; Weber, 1978). The qualifier for the Weber classical bureaucratic theory is that the framework is predicted to occur during stability, without accounting for or considering uncertainty (Ifaka, 2022). The baseline result revealed that labour relations and employees' expectations are maintained at a significant level regardless of bureaucratic leadership rigidity, given recognition for other unobserved factors linked to institutional structure, regulatory framework and the systemic network governance that inform the interagency collaboration programme operated by DESOPADEC as the lead agency.

Collectively, the descriptive statistics and regression results amplify the position that uncertainty is evidently recognised by employees as the dominant explanation that shapes organisational and interagency collaboration, while the characteristics and predisposition of rigid bureaucratic leadership do not substantially either intensify or lessen outcomes in labour relations and employees' expectations. The resultant finding aligns with contemporary studies on network governance and institutional theory, which stressed that organisational outcomes in interagency collaborations are inherently complex and built on contigents factors not limited to leadership style, but accommodates several factors that interplay around institutional rules, interagencies collaborative relationship and environmental conditioning (Sorensen & Torfling, 2007; Kolibra et al., 2014; Yoon & Hyun, 2010).

The implication for DESOPADEC and similar interagency collaboration frameworks, reforms are essential in reshaping labour relations for improvement and enhancing employee satisfaction through

enhancing flexibility, inclusive participation and recognition of labour as a critical stakeholder in decision making, designing procedures, and engagement in capacity building. These reforms are not the exclusive preserve of leadership behaviour. Organisation is a dynamic and complex interaction that should reflect systematic integrations of all parts and aspects of the organisation, whether in a period of stability or high uncertainty.

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for the study.

1. There is a need to promote adaptive leadership practise in the DESOPADEC organisational scheme as it relates to the interagency collaboration programme. The study revealed that rigid bureaucratic leadership do not meaningfully influence labour relations. The perseverance of uncertainty as operation environment for interagency collaboration implied that a highly centralised structure and restrictive rule-based command decision making and communication pattern may limit organisational optimised responsiveness to apt environmental conditions. Public agencies like DESOPADEC should encourage leadership that is flexible in decision-making, inclusive in decision-making, and communication patterns to broaden participation in governance.

2. Policy devotion should focus on consolidating the institutional coordination mechanism across participatory agencies. The exposure of the result that indicated labour relations outcomes was marginally influenced by leadership rigidity, and implicated other contingent factors present but not observed, structural constraints related to coordination that identify specific framework guides like defining reporting protocol, job description and responsibilities within the network, and communication flow pattern that reduces ambiguity in roles and functions.

3. A well-informed, inclusive structural engagement mechanism should be established in the interagency collaboration. This arrangement can leverage a design that embracies employees paticipation in addressing obscure challenges, divergent operational contexts, and personalised challenges. A systematic process can leverage flexibility in addressing the diverse needs of the workforce. The descriptive study exposes the variation of experiences shaping employees' expectations. The high variation among employees creates a risk for disaster, as inequality will continue to be perceived among staff in welfare and administrative concerns.

4. There is a need to create a fair and equitable institutional policy that addresses employees' professional expectations. The legacy challenges of employees seconded to other agencies are strongly contingent on a high level of uncertainty surrounding their working conditions, including promotion timeline, recognition and other welfare benefits attached to the programme. The interagency collaboration programme should be incentivised with additional stimulus rather than serving as a deterrent for those engaged in the programme. The stress employees face accumulates into distrust and dissatisfaction with the interagency collaboration. Such posting should be rationalised relative to tenure for every staff engaged in the commission based on the principle of fairness, justice and equity.

5. The need for capacity building is paramount to help the leadership, labour union, and employees understand that the purpose of the interagency collaboration is to deepen the capacity of the state government to leverage its resources to provide service delivery. The training capacity should accommodate and help to liberalise the programme as an opportunity for employees engaged, rather than weaponise redeployment as punishment. Focusing on interagency cooperation and management, conflict management, and communication skills can help in shaping organisational policy and implementations. The gap between policy, process and outcomes should be narrowed to reduce complexity that derails the possibility for attainment.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the influence of rigid bureaucratic leadership on labour relations and employees' expectations in interagency collaboration where DESOPADEC serve as the lead agency during the period of uncertainty. The descriptive result revealed consistency in a strong level of uncertainty among the respondents, while rigid bureaucratic leadership and employees' expectations were sustained at a moderate level, and labour relations remain weak.

The regression result showed a positive relationship between rigid bureaucratic leadership and labour relations and employees' expectations, but the magnitude of the relationship was not statistically significant, which implied that rigid bureaucratic leadership does not singularly increase or mitigate labour relations and employees' expectations in the context of interagency collaboration. These findings revealed that intergancies' collaboration revolves around a systematic and dynamic interplay of diverse factors that shape institutional or human resource outcomes. With the framework of DESOPADEC collaborative arrangement, the reforms are essential to address issues related to flexibility and inclusiveness in shaping leadership style, participatory governance and inclusive decision-making framework in the pubic sector.

Future Research

Future research focus should extend to other regions to access whether similar results of rigid bureauctatic leadership influence labour relations and employee expectations across multiple agencie collabouration in periods of uncertainty. Longitudinal or mixed method approaches could be explore to further examine the dynamics in the interations of institutional uncertainty, leadership adaptability, employee participation and organisational trust in shaping labour relations.

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