

## **Effect of Leadership Style on Worker's Performance in Nigeria's Organisations**

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### **Abstract**

In today's competitive business environment, organisations expand globally and face lots of challenges to meet their objectives and choose to be more successful than others. Leaders play significant role in the accomplishment of these goals and boost employees' performance with attractive and industry-competitive reward system. This paper relies on secondary data for sourcing information and adopts content analysis for analysing its arguments. It also adopts transformational leadership theory. The paper finds that there is a nexus between leadership style and workers' performance. It also reveals that human resources management strategy has a significant effect on leadership style. It draws a line of correlation between the performance of the JAMB Registrar, Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, and former Chairman of INEC, Prof. Attahiru Jega's leadership styles, their reward or compensation structure, and the agencies' service delivery as well. The paper concludes that effective leadership style is one of the sure ways of improving workers' performance and, as such, should be taken seriously at all levels of management.

### **Keywords**

Leadership style, Worker's performance, Organisation.

### **Introduction**

Leadership style on workers performance in Nigeria's organisation has become a source of concern over the years. This is more problematic because the very

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survival of any organisation is largely determined by the leadership style in harmonising workers efforts and other resources in order to achieve set goals or aims of the organisation. It is not an over statement that most organisations in Nigeria die very early due to bad leadership (Ashibogwu, 2008). Leadership style in an organisation is one of the factors that play significant role in enhancing or retarding the interest and commitment of the individuals in the organisation. This is why Glantz (2002) noted with emphasis the need for a manager to find his leadership style.

In exploring the problem therefore, one must appreciate that in today's competitive environment, organisations expand globally and face a lot of challenges to meet their objectives and consequently, must seek to be more successful than others.

Leaders in this regard play an essential role in the accomplishment of these goals and boost employees' performance by satisfying them with their jobs. The concept and definition of leadership and style may differ from one person, or situation, to another. The word 'leadership' has been used in various aspects of human endeavour such as politics, business, academia, community development, etc. Previous views about leadership described it as personal ability. Messick and Kramer (2004) argued that the degree to which the individual exhibits leadership traits depend not only on his characteristics and personal abilities, but also on the characteristics of the situation and environment in which he finds himself. Since human beings could become members of an organisation in order to achieve certain personal objectives, the extent to which they are active members depends on how they are convinced that their membership will enable them to achieve their predetermined objectives/goals. Therefore, an individual will support an organisation if he believes that through it his personal objectives and goals could be met; if not, the person's interest will decline.

In Nigeria today, many organisations are faced with serious organisational challenges which threaten their existence and survival. It is a known fact that the success of any organisation mostly relies on efficiency in resource mobilisation, allocation and utilisation. which are all functions of an effective leadership and a supportive/cooperative followership. There are two prominent arguments about the power of leadership and followership. Some scholars believe that leaders control the followers and dictate what happens in a public organization (Nikita, 2023). While the second argument is anti-thetical to this, the second view argues that the followers determine changes in the organisation since leaders emerge from the followers, or followers beget the leaders.

This paper goes in line with the first view and aims at examining the effect of leadership style on workers' performance in the management of organisations in Nigeria. It aims to examine the various leadership styles and determine how their absence affects workers' performance. It also aims at using Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC) parastatals, under different leadership with different results. The paper adopts the transformational leadership theory to explain the role of individuals in decision making and implementation in an organisation.

After this introduction, the next segment is on the theoretical framework, methodology and literature review. Following that is the analysis of the impact of leadership style on the performance of organisations generally, while a specific analysis of the impact of leadership on JAMB and INEC in Nigeria would follow. The last segment is on conclusion and recommendations.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts transformational leadership theory. This theory focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher level of performance. The phrase "transforming leadership" was initially used by Burns (1978) in his descriptive study on political leaders; nevertheless, it is currently used in organisational psychology. In Burns' words, "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation." This is the process of changing leadership. Burns noted that it might be challenging to distinguish between management and leadership and asserted that the distinctions lie in traits and actions. He developed the terms "transactional leadership" and "transforming leadership." Burns claims that the transformative technique significantly alters people's and organisations' lives. Employee expectations and goals are altered, and perceptions and values are redesigned. It does not operate on a "give and take" basis like the transactional model does (Rowold and Schlotz, 2009). This paper uses this theory to explore how transformational leaders influence workers performance through charisma, vision and individualised consideration.

## **Materials and Methods**

The paper makes use of the qualitative method, which is devoid of numerical and quantitative data. It thus adopts the secondary method of data gathering. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, documentaries, newspapers and internet sources. Content analysis was adopted as the method of data analysis.

## Literature Review

### *Leadership and Workers Performance*

From the last few decades, there has been an explosion of speculative and empirical works conducted on leadership styles. In most of the literature, leadership has been identified as an important subject in the field of organisational behaviour. Leadership is one with the most dynamic effects during individual and organisational interaction. In other words, ability of management to execute a “collaborated effort” depends on leadership capability. Lee and Chuang (2009) note that the excellent leader not only inspires subordinates’ potential to enhance efficiency but also meets their requirements in the process of achieving organisational goals. Stogdill & Coons (2007) define leadership as the individual behaviour to guide a group to achieve the common target. Fry (2003) explains leadership as use of leading strategy to offer inspiring motive and to enhance the staff’s potential for growth and development. Several reasons indicate that there should be a relationship between leadership style and employee/organisational performance. The first is that today’s intensive and dynamic markets feature innovation-based competition, price/performance rivalry, decreasing returns, and the creative destruction of existing competencies (Santora, Seaton & Sarros, 1999; Venkataraman, 2007). Studies have suggested that effective leadership behaviours can facilitate the improvement of performance when organisations face these new challenges (McGrath and MacMillan, 2000; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 2007).

On the other hand, organisational performance refers to ability of an enterprise to achieve such objectives as high profit, quality product, large market share, good financial results, and survival at pre-determined time using relevant strategy for action (Koontz and Donnell, 2003). Organisational performance can also be used to view how an enterprise is doing in terms of level of profit, market share and product quality in relation to other enterprises in the same industry. Consequently, it is a reflection of productivity of members of an enterprise measured in terms of revenue, profit, growth, development and expansion of the organisation. Understanding the effects of leadership on performance is also important because leadership is viewed by some researchers as one of the key driving forces for improving a firm’s performance.

Previous studies led the expectation that leadership paradigms will have direct effects on customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction, and financial performance. In general, however, the effects of leadership on organisational performance have not been sufficiently explored, according to House and Aditya’s review (2007), who criticised leadership studies for focusing excessively on superior-subordinate relationships to the exclusion of several other functions that leaders perform, and to the exclusion of organisational and environmental variables that are crucial to mediate the leadership-performance

relationship. Another problem with existing studies on leadership is that the results depend on the level of analysis. House and Aditya (2007) distinguished between micro-level research that focuses on the leader in relation to the subordinates and immediate superiors, and macro-level research that focuses on the total organisation and its environment. Other scholars have also suggested that leaders and their leadership style influence both their subordinates and organisational outcomes (Tarabishy and Solomon, 2005).

Fenwick and Gayle (2008), in their study of the missing links in understanding the relationship between leadership and organisational performance conclude that despite a hypothesised leadership-performance relationship suggested by some researchers, current findings are inconclusive and difficult to interpret.

### ***Transformational and Transactional Leadership***

Leadership has two main dimensions i.e. transactional and transformational leadership (Adnan and Mubarak, 2010). Leadership that creates valuable and positive change in the followers is Transformational Leadership. Such a leader focuses on "transforming" others to help each other, to look out for each other, to encourage and be harmonious, and to pay attention towards organisation as a whole. Lievens (2007) and Berson (2001) articulate that transformational leadership is helpful for innovation implemented by the organisation in the era of competition. Transformational leader can smoothen the progress of these changes by placing value on the enlargement of a vision and by encouraging subordinates to pursue that vision. It comprises four leadership scales, namely charisma, inspiration, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

Employees can easily share their knowledge among them when an organisation adopts transformational leadership style (Behery, 2008). Zafra, Retamero & Landa (2008) argue that transformational leaders have high emotional intelligence and they emerge as leaders during group cohesiveness. It also uplifts the morale, motivation, and morals of their followers (Bass, 1999). Again, it also focuses on more sensitive side of organisational interactions like vision, culture, values, development, teamwork, and service (Fairholm, 2001). By emphasising the symbolic and expressive aspects of task goal efforts and the important values involved, the transformational leader makes the difference (Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership has been chosen due to its innovative as well as productive and supportive nature (Fatima, Ahmad & Usman, 2011). One can observe the combination of three mechanisms in Transformational Leadership: Leaders give values to their subordinates, motivate their subordinates and persuade in mounting or varying followers' needs (William, Richards, Steers & James, 2005).

To ensure and enhance the success of an organisation, it is important to adopt the appropriate leadership style. Examining, praising and assessing a leader do not truly assure the followers' honesty. In this case, transformational leadership becomes inapplicable (Parry and Thomson, 2002). Leaders can then practice transactional style of leadership.

Transaction literally means "exchange" therefore, transactional leadership deals with the exchange between leader and his followers. Kuhnert and Lewis (2007) posit that transactional leadership is an exchange between followers and leaders desired outcomes by fulfilling the leader's interest and followers' expectations, which involves promises or commitments embedded by respect and trust. Jung (2000–2001) also defines transactional leadership as leader's attitude towards identification of followers' needs and aspirations and clearly demonstrate the ways to fulfil these needs in exchange for performance of followers. Bass (2000) reported that effective leaders accommodate the interests of their subordinates by giving contingent incentives, honour and promises to those who auspiciously succeed in fulfilling the commitments of the leaders or the organisation.

Transactional leadership has been in focus of researchers for many years and premeditated in numerous ways with different variables. Howell and Merenda (2009) conducted a research on the association between leader-member exchange, transactional and transformational leadership in forecasting employees' performance and concluded that transactional leadership style is a positive predictor of followers' performance. Transactional leadership style is relatively weakly associated with performance and is optimistically related to perception of organisational politics (Gadot, 2007).

### ***Leadership Style and the Organisational Performance***

Relationship between leadership style and organisational performance has been discussed often. Most research findings show that the leadership style has a significant relation with the organisational performance, and different leadership styles may have a positive correlation or negative correlation with the organisational performance, depending on the variables used by researchers. Sun (2002) compared the leadership style with the leadership performance in schools and enterprises, and found that the leadership style has a significantly positive correlation with the organisational performance in both schools and enterprises. Broadly speaking, the leadership performance is identical with the organisational performance. The transformational leadership has a positive correlation with the organisational performance, higher than the exchange (transactional) leadership (Huang, 2006).

Business management attributes their successes to the leadership efficiency, that is, the leadership style of administrative supervisors has a considerable effect on the organisational performance (Terry, 2000). The leadership style of a leader has a considerable influence on the work performance of employees. It further indicates that the leadership style also

affects the organisational performance. The leadership style determines the organisational performance that subordinates need to internalize, and gives suggestions and feedback to execution. In this course, subordinates can know the requirements of their role and executives can know the demands of subordinates at the same time. Thus, under the leadership style of executives, subordinates can make organisational requested performance and get their rewards. Research studies show that the leadership style has a significantly positive correlation with the organisational performance. Therefore, the leadership style should be properly and carefully used to guide and motivate subordinates (Elenkov, 2002).

Campbell (2007) thought that when executives use their leadership style to show concern, care and respect for employees, it would increase the self-interests of employees in work as well as organisational promises, enable them to make better performance in the workplace and affect their job satisfaction. Howell and Meranda (2009) and Bryman (2002) in their separate studies also find that there is a positive relation between the leadership style and the organisational performance.

From this review of related literature, it is evident that although some scholars believe that leadership enhances organisational performance, while others contradict this, different concepts of leadership have been employed in different studies, making direct comparisons virtually impossible. Gaps and unanswered questions remain. Consequently, the current study is intended to re-examine the proposed leadership-performance relationship and, thus, contribute meaningfully to the body of growing literature and knowledge in this area of study.

Most of the scholars that have worked on the subject matter failed to see the possibility of 'fluidity' on the part of the leader(s) in the organisation. It is obvious that each of the leadership styles discussed have their strengths and weaknesses; the transactional leadership style is seen to be too business-oriented while forgetting that not only money/pay motivates the worker. It is known that a well-paid worker may not necessarily be a productive worker. Furthermore, the transformational leadership style is also seen to be too weak in its approach in dealing with the worker. However, a combination of both leadership styles would make a huge difference in the performance of workers in the organisation. That is, none of the leadership style can stand on its own successfully in the organisation due to the dynamism of the worker.

It is the thesis of this paper that all the leadership styles that have been reviewed are applicable in the organisation. It is expected of a leader to know which is applicable in different instances in the organisational setting. A leader is expected to be dynamic and fluid in his dealing with subordinates because different staff and different situation require different leadership style.

## ***Leadership Style and Workers' Performance in Nigeria's Organisations***

A discussion on the subject matter reveals that nowadays, organisations in different sectors of the Nigerian economy continue to record high cases of misappropriation, embezzlement, immoral and unethical practices, gratifications, high labour turnover, inability to meet basic required obligations, and employees' dissatisfaction, which have further resulted in poor staff performance, absence of motivation, poor growth and development of the institutions and forced some to relocate to neighbouring and other developed countries. This has been traced to private and public establishments' inability to raise a crop of time-tested, heroic and authentic leaders (Abiso, Soboyejo, Ilori & Adeogun, 2016; Igbaekemen, 2014; Ojokuku, Odetayo & Sajuyigbe, 2012; Ukaidi, 2016). Igbaekemen (2014) and Ukaidi (2016) found that leadership vacuum has been noticed and confirmed in every sphere of the Nigerian nation and there is desperate need for competent and principled leaders across the Nigerian sectors. Abiso, Soboyejo, Ilori & Adeogun (2016) found that a reliable leader is what is needed now and that to be reliable means living up to peoples' expectations in all ramifications.

Adopting the right style of leadership helps executive managers to establish time-tested relationships, count-on and respect, involve and motivate their subordinates and ensure a conducive task environment. On the other hand, engaging the wrong and unpopular style is resulting to dissatisfied, disengaged or demotivated employees and at the end of the day cause high labour turnover. Similarly, some executive managers who practise a style that is strange and that is against the ethos of their organisations have been found to be unsuccessful (Raelin, 2011). Majority of scholars are now of the view that managers need to find a style which is authentic for them and that they will need to adjust their styles according to the contextual realities and then, the culture of the organisation where they work, the peculiarities of the tasks to be delivered and the characteristics and expectations of their team members (Abiso, Soboyejo, Ilori & Adeogun, 2016).

In Nigeria, as in many other contexts, leadership has a direct cause-effect relationship on organisations and their performance. Leaders determine values, culture, tolerance for change, and motivation for employees (Aboshaqah *et al.*, 2015). They shape organisational approaches, including their efficacy and implementation. It must be emphasised that leaders could be seen at any organisational level and are not exclusive to management (Igbaekemen, 2014). Leaders must be capable of determining whether their leadership skills affect their followers as it supports or does not help the followers. This may have an effect on the actions of employees to follow their leaders; followers or employees who do not have respect towards the leaders may be susceptible to disappointment, which may give rise to an employee's intention of leaving (Aboshaqah *et al.*, 2015).

Though there is no one superior leadership style and all leadership styles are result-oriented depending on the situation that they are applied in management. Tannenbanum and Schmidt (1958) popularised leadership styles that centred around Mc Gregor's Theory 'X and Y' assumptions, and that they are democratic, autocratic, dictatorial, and individualistic leadership styles. Brief discussions about contemporary leadership style dimensions in Nigeria are hereby presented: Autocratic leadership style is characterised by personal influence over the choices and tiny input from other team members (Gimuguni *et al.*, 2014). These leaders emphasise loyalty and commitment and are described as the ones who decide for themselves and need strict compliance to regulations (Gimuguni *et al.*, 2014). This is common under military administrations in Nigeria. Democratic leadership, also referred to as participatory leadership, may be a quite leadership style during which members of the group play a more participatory part within the decision-making process. Success and other people are the themes of this leadership style (Bhargavi & Yaseen, 2016).

Unfortunately, though Nigeria is a democratic state but most of the leaders since commencement of Fourth Republic are retired military officers. Therefore, they are democratically undemocratic. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a process that takes place when one or more individuals interact with others in such a way that those leaders and followers lift one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Transactional leadership style implies that reward or punishment is premised on individual performance (Anbazhagan & Kotur, 2014), and this is often because reward is contingent to performance and punishment for failure to perform effectively (Anbazhagan & Kotur, 2014). Dynamic leadership style (Epstein, 2014) is often a dual-focused sort of leadership style that is adaptive in nature (Negreiros, Pequeno, Garcia, Aguiar, Moreira & Flor, 2017). This leadership style changes and reacts to different situations (Gopal & Chowdhury, 2014). The idea of dynamic leadership holds that a pacesetter should use a fluid sort of leadership to regulate consistent with the team that is being led (Bahmanabadi, 2015).

Some researchers have concluded that the use of positive leadership styles encourages and helps their workers to excel (Bhargavi & Yaseen, 2016). Leaders need to use positive leadership styles to promote success levels of company employee professional development. The types of leadership and organisational effectiveness are closely related (Pradeep & Prabhu, 2011). Efficient leadership style is seen as a clear source of sustained competitive advantage and management of growth (Al Khajeh, 2018). Since members of an organisation contribute in harnessing the resources of the organisation equally depends on how well the managers (leaders) of the organisation therefore,

leaders in Nigeria are enjoined to either be democratic in style or dynamic to bring about much expected desired change and development in the country.

### ***Transformational Leadership Style and Workers' Performance***

Having discussed the impacts of leadership style on workers performance in Nigeria in general, it is aimed here to investigate the impact of transformational leadership style on workers in both JAMB and INEC, two parastatals of the federal government. First, JAMB was established to coordinate admission processes into higher institutions in Nigeria; ranging from the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), monotechnics, polytechnics, and universities, both private and public (Yormight, 2024). Since the inception of JAMB, there has never been a time that the chief executive of the agency (Registrar) was reappointed for the second time, and the workers received such a leader in a ceremonious way, as happened when the present JAMB registrar, Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, was reappointed (Mojeed, 2021, Alabi, 2021). This shows the level of his transformational style, which has made the agency more active and efficient in service delivery. It was reported that JAMB remitted a huge amount of money to the federal government treasury, which has never happened before in the history of the agency (James, 2024). It could be argued here that his laudable achievements in office are based on his transformational leadership style, which has made him have a vision and pursue it vehemently. The leadership style came into play when one considers that Prof. Oloyede made use of the same workers used by his predecessors. This scenario is an indication that leadership style determines the attitudinal disposition and performance of workers towards work and assignments.

Second, the Independent National Electoral Commission under Professor Attahiru Jega is another example of transformational leadership style. Prof. Jega was appointed as INEC chairman after Prof. Maurice Iwu (Dayo, 2010). The 2007 elections under Prof. Maurice Iwu were described as the most unfree and unfair elections in Nigeria (Jibrin, 2007). However, when Prof. Jega was appointed and conducted elections in 2011 and 2015, there were significant differences between these elections and the one conducted in 2007. Both local and international observers adjudged these elections conducted by Jega as free and fair elections (Ritchard, 2022). How did he achieve this landmark, if not his transformational leadership style? He made use of the same workers used by his predecessors but performed differently.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the impact of leadership style on workers' performance in Nigeria. Growth and survival in organisational management depends on microscopic analysis of operational process and marketing effectiveness. The question posed by the paper was if leadership style does affect employee performance, what are the leadership styles and how will their

absence affect employee performance in the organisation? It was observed that, there is a nexus between leadership style and employee performance in the organisation in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study showed that, there is no one superior leadership style and that all leadership styles are result-oriented depending on the situation that they are applied in management.

The extent to which members of an organisation contribute in harnessing the resources of the organisation equally depends on how well the managers (leaders) of the organisation understand and adopt appropriate leadership style in performing their roles as managers and leaders. It is argued that transformational leadership style of former chairman of INEC and Registrar of JAMB brought about changes in workers' performance and service delivery. Thus, efficiency in resource mobilization, allocation, utilization and enhancement of organisational performance depends, to a large extent, on leadership style, among other factors. Therefore, we can argue that if organisations in Nigeria, both private and public, would be effective and become model for other African countries to emulate it has to pay attention to who becomes what in any organisation in Nigeria.

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