



Relationship Between Effective Leadership and Staff Performance in Nigerian Public Service: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

The numerous issues plaguing Nigeria's public sector are mainly attributable to a lack of strong leadership that may serve as a model for accelerating organisational growth and expansion through enhanced employee performance. Administrators in charge of organisations must inspire their staff to provide work that meets or exceeds corporate objectives. To accomplish the goals and objectives of the organisation, leaders may use democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire leadership styles, depending on the circumstances. Therefore, the article seeks to ascertain the relationship between effective leadership and employee performance in Nigerian public organisations. Data are generated from secondary sources and analysed thematically. The study discovered that for Nigeria's public service to overcome the challenges of leadership in the country's public bureaucracy, those entrusted with the burden of leadership must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties and obligations. Also, findings reveal that lack of vision, political will, transparency, accountability, and adequate motivation negatively affect staff performance and consequently deter the growth and progress of the public organisations in championing the course of overall development. The paper recommended the need for the enthronement of transformational democratic leaders founded on distinct sound value systems with probity and accountability and those that prioritise the welfare of the staff and the overall organisational goal. The paper concludes that only leadership with maximum empathy for the people, particularly the staff, can be relevant to the overall organisational goal and objectives, especially in the Nigerian public service.

Keywords: Effective leadership, staff, performance, public service

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is essential to change every organisation and society as a whole on a global scale (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). The art of governance is a challenging endeavour that calls for many sacrifices, commitments, and dedications from the leaders to safeguard the present and ensure sustainable progress in all contexts of organisational settings (Cortellazzo et al., 2019; Nasidi et al., 2022). Because of this, it is essential to examine how effective leadership affects employee performance, particularly in the public sector. According to Hassan et al. (2018), there are four distinct types of effective leadership styles. These styles include direct control, personal qualities, charm, and personality, which are used to drive others' performance. By establishing a direction for the organisation, effective leaders are concerned with creating a framework for where the organisation needs to be in the future.

There is mounting evidence that organisations are now cognizant of the effective leadership styles have on employees' well-being and organisational outcomes in today's dynamic global workplace (Kim et al., 2019). Leadership greatly influences organisations and countries' overall well-being (Boyer-Davis, 2018). A happy and enriching work atmosphere is created by leaders motivating people to offer ideas and innovations, which leads to higher performance (Mohapatra & Sundaray,

2018). To accomplish the specified goals that are in line with the government's policy objectives at all levels, Nigerian public service leaders must prioritise raising their employees' performance levels since they are important assets.

Leadership is highly important in any group or organisation (Cortellazzo et al., 2019), and it may imply the difference between the success and failure of any group or joint endeavour. An effective leader motivates their team members to increase productivity and attends to their needs while working toward a predetermined goal (Arif & Akram, 2018). Additionally, leadership is crucial because it has the potential to level the playing field for all employees in organisations by encouraging a merit-based career path for all of its employees (Arif & Akram, 2018). Therefore, the quest for effective leadership is a sine-qua-non for improved staff performance.

Unfortunately, in the Nigerian public service, public organisations were blamed for their high levels of involvement or overconcentration of leaders in decision-making, lack of dedication and commitment, poor management, a lack of transparency and accountability, low levels of incentives, low levels of employee motivation, inconsistent promotion, and other issues (Olukanni & Nwafor, 2019). However, the management at different levels blames their employees for their poor performance, lack of skill, and carefree attitudes. Therefore, this paper

aims to look at the relationship between effective leadership and staff performance in the Nigerian public service.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Concept of Leadership and Effective Leader

Leadership is a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal. In other words, leadership means harnessing individual differences, strengths and weaknesses of persons to achieve a stated goal (Pretorius et al., 2018). However, a leader is someone who inspires a group to accomplish a shared objective. A good leader is objective and flexible. He provides for the requirements of each individual in the group fairly and treats everyone equally. A strong and adaptable leader is essential.

A good leader identifies the most important points in an organisation's evolution, develops pertinent strategies, and then converts those plans into operational actions for the desired change direction. Focus, vision, the ability to delegate effectively, the ability to motivate others, self-awareness, compassion, and open-mindedness are just a few traits of a successful leader. Effectively communicate the vision. According to Majluf and Abarca (2021), leaders have a strong sense of self-expression and are aware of why they desire something and how to convey that to others in a way that would elicit their collaboration and support.

The art of leadership involves influencing others' behaviour in a certain way. In general, leadership may be thought of as persuading people to pursue a common objective (Abbas et al., 2022). Mansaray (2019) states that leadership is the capacity to influence a group of people to pursue a vision or a set of objectives. For maximum success, public or private organisations need capable management and leadership. Today, organisations and society require leaders to question the current quo, envision the future, and motivate followers to work toward their goals. According to Alqatawenah (2018), leadership is a process that involves interactions between a leader and their followers. It is a procedure wherein one person persuades a group of others to work toward a common objective.

Schulze and Pinkow (2020) assert that strong leaders possess the vision necessary to perceive things uniquely. Having a clear vision of where they want to go and communicating it to prospective followers so that they understand their role in accomplishing that goal is a fundamental quality of all good leaders. Character, vision, behaviour, and confidence are the four key traits Homan et al. (2020) identified as stable across time when analysing leadership ability.

According to (Zaratou & GOGA, 2021), leaders, in essence, control how the group functions to achieve a common goal. Clarified organisational skills, strategic thinking, and a character filled with vision and benevolence are necessary. Since team members often attribute leadership to those, they believe in favourably influencing the accomplishment of desired objectives, it is believed that someone carrying the leadership role must, among other things, possess attributes of tact, vision, charisma, character, and goodwill. There are many public leaders in positions of power in public life. These individuals include

those who work tirelessly to obtain positions of authority in the government, as well as those who already occupy such positions.

Drawing from the different views mentioned above, a visionary and bold individual who inspires a group of individuals toward an effective and efficient outcome is referred to as a leader. He is the one charged with creating and carrying out the policies that are meant to be accurate representations of the organisation's desires and objectives while maintaining the overall well-being of the workers. According to the Nigerian public service, a leader is someone who can affect others' behaviour to accomplish a specific goal.

Staff Performance

Performance is seen as a crucial activity that offers both objectives and strategies for achieving organisational goals, as well as the degree of success in terms of production (Werdiastutie et al., 2020). Murphy (2020) defines performance as the results gained via the activities and talents of employees who perform in a particular environment. Performance is also any cooperative effort employees perform that contributes to an organisation's success by raising productivity and profitability. Employee performance, according to Fathallah et al. (2020), is any effort made by a person toward the accomplishment of a specific objective that can be seen and measured.

Staff performance is also called employee performance. Employee performance is the combination of how employees act at work and how successfully they carry out their tasks (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Performance for a specific employee can relate to the efficacy, quality, and efficiency of work at the task level. Employee performance refers to how a staff worker performs the responsibilities of their position, completes necessary tasks and acts in the workplace (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2018). The effectiveness, quantity, and quality of the job are performance indicators.

The individual employee either completes or fails to complete a task, according to the definitions of employee job performance given above. Therefore, for an organisation to function, each member must put aside their objectives, at least partly, to work toward the group's objectives. Therefore, effective leadership styles may affect individual and organisational performance by enabling more employee involvement as the circumstance requires.

Employee commitment, meeting deadlines, achievement, output/work quality, responsibility, operational efficiency and effectiveness, positive attitude toward work, delivery of excellent customer service, the rarity of cases of absenteeism, job satisfaction, increased productivity, working with less supervision, growth, low turnover of top talents. Harmonious working relationships are just a few examples of how employee performance can be broken down.

Public Service

Public service refers to the work that government officials and employees do on behalf of the public (Lindgren et al., 2019). It includes the services provided by government organisations such as schools, courts, prisons, and parks. It also consists of the programs and policies developed by

government organisations to serve the public. Public service is an important part of a democratic society (Karpa et al., 2021). Moreover, The Public Service is a group of government organisations and agencies that are designed to serve the public rather than private interests (Kuril, 2018). The primary objective of Public Service is to provide high-quality services to citizens in a cost-effective manner.

Public service is a broad term used to describe the work of government officials, public sector employees, and other professionals who provide services to the public in exchange for a salary, benefits, and the opportunity to serve their community (Osborne, 2020). Public sector employees include employees of government agencies, state and local governments, and agencies of the federal government. They are often called government employees, civil servants, or public servants. They include government officials, such as legislators and governors, civil servants, teachers, police officers, firefighters, and other professionals such as social workers, nurses, and lawyers (Bauer & Becker, 2020). Public service is the work to make the country, state, and community a better place for everyone. Also, in Nigeria, the term public service covers the civil service judiciary, police, prisons, public enterprises, and local government.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The contingency theory of leadership, which makes the premise that no one leadership style is suitable for all circumstances, is used in this study. Fiedler's Contingency Model is the best appropriate theory for this study regarding leadership contingency theories. It is often referred to as the situation favouring leadership. According to Musavinejad and Nastiezaie (2018), the Fiedler contingency model argues that a leader's ability to motivate a group effectively depends on how much control the environment offers the leader. In other words, a certain leadership style's effectiveness relies significantly on the circumstances present at the moment. For instance, a more autocratic style may be more efficient in completing the task swiftly when time is limited, and the results of the decisions are expected to have little impact on subordinates. In contrast, a more participative leadership style may be more effective when the subordinates are engaged and accountable.

This research is most suited to the contingency leadership theory since the situation would dictate the appropriate course of action. A leader is not expected to exhibit just one type of leadership behaviour. According to Wang (2019), various leadership trajectories and talents are needed in various circumstances. According to Fiedler's Contingency theory, it needs a dynamic leader to find the gap between a current public service purpose, management culture, and the public interest in the public sector, particularly in Nigeria. This suggests that to achieve the fundamental national values enshrined in the Fundamental Objectives and Directives Principles of State Policies, as prescribed in Chapter 11 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, leaders must work to create a public service that will support and encourage the provision of their subordinates' social and psychological needs.

Effective Leadership and Staff Performance in Nigeria

An effective leader has to be a fearless, pragmatic, and visionary leader with transformative ideas (Mitra & Tapas, 2019). Yet he was despised by some because of his authoritarian style of political leadership. Even so, how best to capture and dispassionately examine his legacy is what many scholars and public intellectuals would grapple with for decades. The ability to lead derives from a leader's official authority and personal traits like reputation, talent, or charisma. A leader must blend both authoritarian and democratic leadership styles and join the laissez-faire leader (Abdullahi et al., 2020).

For every organisation to succeed, leadership is a necessary condition (Joiner, 2019). The management of employees and the entire organisation has embraced leadership as a new, successful strategy. This highlights the significance of new leadership's strategic integration into efficient workforce management and raising employee productivity (Schoemaker et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2021). Effective leadership boosts workforce productivity throughout all economic sectors of a nation.

According to Meng and Berger (2019), leadership affects productivity in the following ways; it boosts employee morale, acts as a motivator, establishes a foundation for collaboration, permits task allocation based on capability, provides necessary guidance, and fosters effective communication. As a result, the need for effective leadership grows as organisations expand and expectations for their performances rise. Most research showed that leadership style has a significant relationship with employee performance, and different leadership styles may have a positive or negative correlation with employee performance (Imhangbe et al., 2019; Jibola, 2020; Musa et al., 2018; Shafiu et al., 2019).

Leadership positively influences employee performance (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2019) and therefore play an essential role in ensuring the increase of organisation and individual performance (Saliu et al., 2018). Performance, explained as the accomplishment, execution, carrying out, and working out of anything ordered or undertaken (Gamji et al., 2022; Popoola, 2019), is greatly influenced by leadership style (Oyugi & Gogo, 2019; Ugwu, 2019). Public managers may serve as role models for their subordinates by displaying remarkable technical competence, persevering in completing challenging tasks, and recognising the employees' worth and input to inspire and influence extra-role behaviours. Employees will be inspired to work harder to enhance their performance as a result of this.

Leadership inspires and motivates employees to work hard towards organisational objectives and help the organisation succeed (Purwanto et al., 2021). Mansaray (2019) indicated that high performance comes about as a result of appropriate behaviour, especially discretionary behaviour and the effective use of required knowledge, skills and competencies, which is influenced by leadership style. Employees, therefore, decide to do the responsibilities because they identify with the boss. Positive correlations between leadership style and performance at different levels have been shown in studies on leadership.

The effectiveness of public organisations in Nigeria is determined by staff competence, motivation and general effectiveness. More so, the provision of staff development and training programmes becomes imperative to improve the subordinates' quality; hence, the quality-of-service delivery depends largely on the quality and quantity of employees. Leaders in the Public Service must adopt a leadership style that will encourage their staff to do their best to achieve the desired goals. This implies that the leader must exhibit good administrative behaviour that will propel his followers, giving the impression that he is supportive of their effort and recognises subordinates' worth.

Leadership Challenges in Nigeria's Public Service

According to (Ojogiwa, 2021), a poor leadership style lowers employee morale since it makes employees hesitant to do the tasks given to them. This is because what they receive from their leader is unexpected. According to Ogunmokun et al. (2020), a bad leadership style will negatively impact the workforce and cause discord inside the organisation. It can take the shape of a work stoppage, protesting, failing to follow management rules and regulations, etc. when employees are mistreated and disregarded at work, they will express their resentment by participating in one sort of demonstration or another, which will obstruct efficient and present planned processes for attaining the organisational goals (Ukeje et al., 2020).

The Nigerian public service lacks true leaders, and some of the following examples show how this is mirrored in public organisations:

Lack of Commitment: The capacity to accomplish what is right, what is relevant, and what is attainable within the context of patriotic nationalism are all based on commitment, which is the driving force behind excellent leadership qualities. Many observers of Nigeria's growth and problems since independence concur that the public sector has been negatively impacted by weak leadership due to a lack of political will or commitment.

Absence of Accountability and Transparency: In Nigeria, transparent and accountable leadership has been absent. A government is deemed to be accountable when its leaders are genuinely responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of their citizenry. Thus, the leaders at federal, state and local government levels are neither accountable nor transparent, while due process is largely boycotted.

Corruption: Despite corruption being a worldwide affliction, Nigeria seems to be particularly affected by this ailment. Everyone seems to agree that the country has a culture of corruption. However, Nigeria is a wealthy oil-dependent country; hardly any of its money is distributed to its citizens. Numerous reforms combined with our leaders' lack of openness and ethics have left Nigeria as corrupt as ever. According to the global corruption perception index (CPI), Nigeria was ranked 130th out of the 180 nations assessed in 2009. On the annual corruption perception index, the nation slipped from 144 in 2018 to 146 in 2019 (Baumann, 2020).

Nepotism: Nigerians' tendency to encourage their leaders to engage in corrupt behaviour is another factor contributing to the country's leadership problems. An additional leadership difficulty in Nigeria is the emphasis on ethnic background. Tribalism may be the one thing that

has rendered our efforts ineffective (Domashova & Politova, 2021).

Lack of Staff Motivation: Leadership inspires and motivates employees to work hard towards organisational objectives and help the organisation succeed. Failure of most of the leaders in the public sector to provide welfare facilities to their employees negatively affects the staff performance.

Non-Participation of Subordinate in Decisions: The non-involvement of employees in decision-making processes is another element that contributes to the failure of public sector leadership.

Therefore, as the employees are not given a chance to participate or contribute to any decision-making, insufficient or low performance and inefficiency are some of the repercussions of bad leadership on the employees in Nigeria. Low productivity and inefficiency will ensue, and they won't have a sense of community at work. As a result, the employee won't give it their all to help the company reach its objectives.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, we acknowledge that moving organisations toward a better or higher position is the major goal of a successful leader, particularly in the Nigerian public sector. When making changes, the entire organisation and its surroundings must be taken into account since this sort of objective necessitates a long-term commitment.

At all management levels in the Nigerian public sector, administrators and managers must demonstrate leadership. Ineffective leadership causes society to crumble because priorities are not met. To achieve set organisational goals, managers or administrators, particularly in Nigerian public organisations, frequently exhibit many leadership styles, including authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. At different times and in different settings, each leadership style produces a varied set of outcomes.

Based on the leadership challenges and conclusion, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. The leaders at all levels of the Nigerian public sector should have the political will to lead their respective organisations in accomplishing the predetermined goals and objectives. They must be committed and dedicated by putting aside all personal interests to carry out the overall mandates entrusted to them. The leader has to be committed and dedicated to being at the forefront of leading the organisation. Hence, he has to lead by example.
- ii. The leaders at all levels of the Nigerian public sector should be genuinely responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of their citizenry. Thus, the leaders at federal, state and local government levels must be accountable and transparent by following due process in their daily responsibilities. The government at all levels and the occupants of various leadership positions in the public service are deemed accountable when they are

- genuinely responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of their citizenry. Thus, the leaders must be above board in their dealings, especially when incurring entrusted finances while taking decisions.
- iii. Since corruption has permeated the Nigerian public service, in the first place, the leaders have to be corrupt-free. Secondly, anyone found wanted should be judiciously punished by the anti-graft agencies-EFCC and ICPC. The Acts have to be reviewed in putting stringent measures or penalties against any corrupt person, and corruption-related cases must be decided immediately. Hence, our judicial system has to be reformed, and if possible, a special court has to be established to handle corruption cases.
 - iv. Leaders have to be neutral and impartial in their dealings. Merit should be the major yardstick in terms of recruitment and promotion, among others. Also, there should be an emphasis on fairness and equity in taking decisions. The citizens should be enlightened more on the negative effects of corruption and the need to stop pressuring those in leadership positions with all sorts of personal demands.
 - v. Also, becoming an effective leader is arduous because there must be the will to take a risk for the personal desire to transform the workplace into a haven with compassion and driven passion. Thus, financial and non-financial incentives should be adequately provided to motivate staff, especially the hardworking ones, towards improved sustainable performance to fast track the attainment of the overall organisational objectives and goal.
 - vi. Furthermore, efforts should be intensified to ensure that employees are fully involved in decision-making, hence the need to emphasise on democratic style of leadership. The leaders or administrators in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other levels must understand the complex relationships among performance determinants and recognise what can be done to influence them beneficially.

Therefore, there is a need to formulate and implement a scheme of reward for good services rendered to motivate officers who uphold good or better performance. Finally, efforts should be made to instil a culture of change based on patriotism, subordination of individual interest to the general one and national interest among Nigerian public service employees to enhance performance.

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