

INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLES ON TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN LAGOS STATE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Teacher productivity at the secondary school level has been a concern to stakeholders. This concern could be associated with principals' leadership style, which appears not to be given a premium place in the school system. This study investigated the influence of principals' traditional leadership styles on teacher productivity in Lagos State Public Secondary Schools, Nigeria. Traditional leadership styles, including autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic, were examined in relation to their impact on teacher performance, motivation, classroom management, and overall productivity. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 900 respondents comprising principals and teachers selected across Lagos State Public Secondary Schools in six Educational Districts. Findings revealed that democratic leadership style had a positive effect on teacher productivity, while autocratic and laissez-faire styles had negative impacts. The study concluded that leadership style significantly determines teacher effectiveness, and recommended training for school principals on the participatory leadership model.

Keywords: Traditional Leadership Styles, Principals' and Teachers' Productivity, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Introduction

At the secondary school level of the Nigerian educational system, the principal is the administrative head accountable for all that happens in the school. He is responsible for delivering both curricular and co-curricular services in the school system. While directly or indirectly involved in the planning, policy-making, and program development of the school, the principal does not work alone in implementing the school's policies and programs. He influences others, particularly teachers, in the school system to actualise school goals and objectives. The principals' activities in the school system involve all the management functions as identified by Ibukun (2004), Nwankwoala (2016), and Alabi and Oyetakin (2021), including planning, organising, coordinating, controlling and evaluating. Thus, the principal is the manager of the secondary school who influences others in the school system to provide qualitative instructional service delivery for the achievement of the stated educational goals and objectives. Furthermore, Welhrich, Cannice and Kooniz (2015) corroborated that management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment for efficiently accomplishing selected aims. However, managerial skills are not uniform; they vary with the organisational context. Nevertheless, the goal of all managers is the same: to achieve maximum benefit for the organisation.

In many secondary schools across Lagos State, Traditional Leadership Styles, rooted in cultural norms, authority, and hierarchy, remain prevalent. These styles often dictate how decisions are made, how teachers are supervised, and how school goals are achieved.

However, the relationship between such leadership styles and teachers' productivity is still a subject of concern.

The productivity of teachers, measured in their ability to plan lessons, engage students, manage classrooms and improve learning outcomes, is connected to the success of secondary schools. However, the subject of teachers' productivity has been a major concern among stakeholders in the Education industry/Orumba Philip and Solomon, 2021). Despite various reforms and educational policies in Nigeria, teachers' productivity remains a persistent issue in many Public Secondary Schools. Anecdotal empirical studies indicate that principals' traditional Leadership styles, especially autocratic or laissez-faire approaches, may demotivate teachers, hinder innovation, and reduce classroom effectiveness. It is thus necessary to examine whether traditional leadership styles influence teacher productivity in Lagos State, and to what extent. This study explores the extent to which traditional styles influence the productivity of teachers in Lagos State Secondary Schools, aiming to provide data that may inform better leadership practices for improved educational outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between principals. Traditional Leadership Style and teachers' productivity in Lagos State Public Secondary Schools. Specifically, this study investigated the relationship between

- i. principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' productivity in Lagos State Public Secondary Schools.
- ii. Principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in Lagos State Public Secondary Schools;
- iii. Principals' democratic leadership styles and teachers' productivity in Lagos State Public Secondary School.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were answered

- Q1. What is the relationship between principals' *laissez-faire* leadership style and teachers' productivity in public Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?
- Q2. Does any relationship exist between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in Public Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?
- Q3. Does any relationship exist between the principal's democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in public Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' *laissez-faire* leadership style and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Review of Literature

There are several modern theories of leadership that explain the relationship between leadership style and specific situations. This study has identified them as situational and contingency approaches, which include leadership modern developed by Fielder and his associates. An early, extensive effort to combine leadership style and organisational situation into a comprehensive theory of leadership was made by Fred Fiedler and his associates in the early 1960s. The basic idea is simple: Match the leader with the situation most favourable for his or her success. By diagnosing leadership style and the organisational situation, the correct fit can be arranged.

Fielder posits that there is no one-size-fits leadership style, and the most effective style depends on matching a leader's natural style with the demands of the situation. The model suggests that leaders' style is mostly shaped by life's experiences. This theory is anchored on the importance of understanding the situation and its demands, which is labelled by Fielder as "situational favourableness" or situational control. The implication of the model on the principal of Public Secondary Schools here is to match his leadership style with a situation that fits his natural leadership ability, rather than trying to force him to adapt to another style.

Autocratic Leadership Style

When a school needs to adapt to rapid and sudden change, leaders need to make quick decisions. As a result, the role of an autocratic leader is considered equivalent to that of an emergency room surgeon who is forced to take the necessary steps to save a patient's life. In other words, autocratic leaders, according to various studies, make all the decisions, set the goals and objectives, and communicate instructions to their team members. Olalekan et al (2022) asserted an autocratic leadership is a style where leaders have absolute control and authority to make decisions and supervise their subordinates with minimal or no input from others. Under this kind of leadership, principals use their intuition, knowledge and ethical values to make managerial decisions. They don't look to seek suggestions from team members and go by their own experience and expertise.

Olalekan et al (2022) also established that autocratic leaders tend to have the following five characteristics:

- (i) They do not consult members of the organisation in the decision-making process.
- (ii) The leaders set all policies,
- (iii) the leader predetermines the methods of work,
- (iv) the leader determines the duties of followers and
- (v) The leader specifies technical and performance evaluation standards.

Since this style of leadership usually involves one person deciding, it permits quick decision-making. However, Hackman & Johnson (2003), cited in Nwachukwu (2018), affirmed strongly that the autocratic style is relatively unpopular, but in certain contingencies or situations, it can be an effective strategy to drive organisational goals, especially when the leader has a deadline and when followers are not productive. These researchers also defined autocratic leadership as an authoritarian style of leadership power and decision-making residing in the autocratic leader.

Meanwhile, there are variations of autocratic leadership style. Wilhrich, Canize and Kronz (2015) write that some autocratic leaders are benevolent autocratic. Although they listen considerably to their followers' opinions before making decisions, the decision is their own. They may be more autocratic than benevolent.

Democratic Leadership Style

The root word democracy comes from the Greek word "demos", meaning people and "kratia", meaning power. This could be asserted that the power for responsibility lies with the people; people remain the deciding factor in any democratic practices and not the individual; it is not a one-man show. Decision-making in a democratic leadership is based on consultation, deliberation and participation (Amadi, 2014). The author also asserted that democratic leadership builds consensus through participation, but these leaders also expect a higher level of productivity. Amadi (2014) identified four major principles of democratic leadership style: (i) the mobilisation of the personnel, (ii) active staff development policy, (iii) delegation of power and (iv) enforcement of control.

However, studies like Tella (2007) and Kanun (2012) have reported a great relationship between democratic leadership practices and productivity, asserting a nexus connecting the work environment and the output of workers. According to the authors, a respectable and equitable work environment where every worker is treated in a reputable manner is a stimulant for greater profit. A deeper assessment of the author's work on democratic leadership style in work workplace revealed that employee job satisfaction increases when they are under a democratic leadership structure that includes the provision of incentives, developing effective communication between employers and employees, listening to the workers and providing a conducive environment for making general decisions.

Additionally, Northouse (2013) believed that when employee job satisfaction increases, performance also increases, which will then reflect on organization productivity. Meanwhile, the concept of training binds democratic leadership and productivity. This is based on the belief that adequate and efficient training increases both employees' performance as well as organisational productivity. Meanwhile, Aina (2005) corroborated that when workers are properly trained, their performance increases, which directly reflects on the level of organisational productivity. Similarly, Aina further posits that in an organisation where proper training is conducted, employees are groomed in line with their responsibilities, which will affect their overall performance. Meanwhile, this study has revealed that productivity is connected to workers' state of mind. However, why is this relevant in this study?. It has been reported by a plethora of authors that democratic leadership is based on a set of principles that allow companies to create a robust culture. When Principals empower teachers to be part of the decision-making process, they are fostering engagement among your workforce. This will consequently lead to a high level of job satisfaction resulting in to higher productivity of secondary schools.

Laissez-faire Leadership

The name might be misconstrued as being in a constructive or unprogressive leadership style, but contrary to that, though it is a carefree kind of leadership style, it allows workers freedom to adapt to better alternatives suited to achieving organisational goals without much interference or continual questioning. According to Franca (2023) the kind of Leadership style allows managers to make decisions but requires to give constructive

feedback when called upon. Laissez-faire leader excel at delegating and inspiring trust in their staff by giving them autonomy over responsibilities.

They can offer helpful criticism when necessary, and because they freely give staff responsibility, they are frequently viewed as trusting. Allowing the team to make a faster decision when facing a difficulty, they do not have to worry about their leader's approval, which sometimes takes a long time. This is very effective in creating a team for sound decision-making skills, because instead of relying on others to tell them what to do, they are building up their intuition and decision-making muscles. This kind of leadership style is always preferable, especially if your team is new. To reach that level of confidence and knowledge requires years. Otherwise, it is very risky.

Laissez-faire Leader and Group/Free Run

- i. He has no confidence in his leadership ability.
- ii. He does not have goals for the group
- iii. Decision-making is performed by whoever in the group is willing to accept it.
- iv. Productivity is generally low, and work is sloppy
- v. The group has little interest in their work
- vi. Morale and teamwork are generally low.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used, and the population of the study included all Lagos State public Secondary school teachers and principals. 900 teachers were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation from different districts. A stratified questionnaire titled Principals Leadership Style and Teacher Productivity Questionnaire (PLSTPQ) was used. It contains 25 items across four leadership dimensions and productivity indicators.

Results

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Lagos State.

To test the hypothesis, the data were subjected to Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 1:

Relationship between Principals' Laissez-Faire Leadership Practice and Teachers' Productivity

Variables	N	df	r.cal	p-value	decision
Laissez Faire Leadership Style	900				
		898	0.136	0.306	HO not rejected
Teachers' Productivity	900				

p > 0.05

The result in Table 1 showed that the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' productivity was not statistically significant. With the r-cal of 0.136 and p value of 0.306, it is inferred that no significant relationship existed between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' productivity; hence, the tested null hypothesis is not rejected.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Lagos State.

To test the hypothesis, the data on autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity were subjected to Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

Relationship between Principals' Autocratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Productivity

Variables	N	df	r.cal	p-value	decision
Autocratic Leadership Style	900				
		898	0.136	0.306	HO not rejected
Teachers' Productivity	900				

*** $p < 0.05$**

The results presented in Table 2 showed the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity. With the r.cal of -0.358 and pvalue of 0.000, it is concluded that a significant negative relationship exists between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity. This implies that as autocratic leadership practice increases, the level of teachers' productivity tends to diminish.

Research Hypothesis three: There is no significant relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

To test the hypothesis, the data on principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity were subjected to Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3:

Relationship between Principals' Democratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Productivity

Variables	N	df	r.cal	p-value	decision
Democratic Leadership Style	900				
		898	0.136	0.306	HO not rejected
Teachers' Productivity	900				

*** $p < 0.05$**

The result in Table 3 showed that the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity was significant. With the r -cal of 0.288 and critical value of 0.02, it is inferred that a significant relationship exists between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity; hence, the tested null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

It was found that a significant negative relationship exists between principals' autocratic leadership practice and teachers' productivity. This implied that autocratic leadership would lead to a low level of productivity in secondary schools in Lagos State. This finding negates the finding of Igunnu (2020), who conducted a study to predict leadership styles and productivity among administrative heads of secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria and revealed that autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style significantly predict productivity among administrative heads. A finding reported by Okoji (2016) revealed that there was a relationship between autocratic leadership style and teachers' job performance. Also, Mwangi (2013) submitted that among the key findings of the study was the fact that principals' autocratic leadership was significantly helpful in encouraging teachers to perform their duties.

Findings equally showed that a significant positive relationship exists between principals' democratic leadership practice and teachers' productivity. This finding supports the findings of Nwachukwu and Emunemu (2020), who investigated principals' leadership style and teacher effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State and submitted that democratic leadership style and teacher effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State were significantly related ($r=0.715$, $p<0.05$). The finding, however, contradicts the finding of Adeyemi (2011), who investigated the relationship that existed between principals' leadership styles (autocratic, democratic and *laissez-faire*) and teachers' productivity, and found that the democratic leadership style yielded a moderate teacher productivity while the autocratic leadership style yielded a better teacher productivity. Maulid *et al* (2022) also concluded that a principal's democratic leadership style can influence and improve teacher performance. Agu and Oputa (2021) also concluded based on the findings of their study that democratic leadership styles can improve teachers' productivity.

Summary

The study was carried out to investigate the relationship between principals' traditional leadership style and productivity in Lagos State public secondary schools, and to investigate the level of productivity in Lagos State Secondary Schools. Three research questions were raised and answered, while three hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance using Pearson's product-moment correlation and t-test. The study utilised a descriptive design of survey style. The population consisted of 900 respondents, which included principals and teachers in Lagos State Public Secondary School.

Findings revealed that:

- i. A positive significant relationship exists between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' productivity;

- ii. A significant negative relationship exists between the principal's autocratic leadership style and teachers' productivity;
- iii. There was no significant relationship between principals' Laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' productivity.

Conclusion

It is concluded that principals utilise different traditional leadership styles to a moderate extent and this led to a moderate level of teachers' productivity. In addition, democratic leadership practice, when in place, could lead to improved productivity while autocratic leadership could lead to lower productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

The principal should intensify efforts in democratic leadership practices. Teachers should ensure they are flexible in their teaching, report for duties at the appropriate time and use appropriate instructional materials while teaching the students, as this will lead to better productivity on their part. Principals should desist from making unilateral decisions and not respect the opinion of teachers in school matters. Continual application of autocratic leadership practice in Lagos State secondary schools could be counterproductive.

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