

Leadership Styles Of Principals And School Organisational Performance: A Study Of Selected Secondary Schools In Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja

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Abstract

This study examined principals' leadership styles and school organisational performance in Bwari Area Council in the FCT. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Three research questions were used to guide the study while three hypotheses were formulated. Population of five secondary schools was randomly selected for the study, and 110 respondents, including 20 teachers, 1 principal, and 1 vice principal from each school were involved. The study used a structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Titled "Principal Leadership Style and School Organizational Performance, Bwari Area Council Questionnaire (PLSSOPBACQ)" it was pilot-tested, validated by experts and the reliability coefficient was established to be 0.81. It was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), processed with SMARTPLS 2. Findings were that all three leadership styles: democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire had significant effects on school organizational performance. Democratic leadership was found to enhance communication and inclusivity, and fostering a more collaborative environment. Autocratic leadership contributed to organizational stability and order, ensuring clear authority lines. Laissez-faire leadership, however, exhibited mixed effects, with outcomes depending on specific contextual factors within the schools. Based on these findings, the study recommends that principals should foster open communication and dialogue among stakeholders, encourage team-based decision-making to ensure inclusive participation, and create a supportive environment where all stakeholders - staff, students, and parents can freely express their opinions without fear of criticism or judgment. These strategies are expected to improve collaboration and overall school organizational performance.

Introduction

Leadership is as old as man. It is a major element that sets successful and unsuccessful organizations and government apart. It plays a central role in offering direction and purpose towards achieving goals of an organization (Hughes, 2020). Leadership is an important element in the social relationship of groups at work; it is the main factor that determines and shapes group behaviour. When leadership is correctly applied, employees develop a sense of strong commitment toward achieving organizational goals. Even in groups with equal members, leadership structures naturally emerge to provide direction and coordination as well as magnitude (Akyurek, 2024).

The magnitude and importance of leadership in different organizations have long been unnoticed and unobserved from a long period of time. But now its importance has been realized and has become a burning issue all over the world. Effective leadership enhances the productivity of employees in all the sectors of the economy in a country. Leadership skills such as technical, conceptual, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence significantly impact employees' productivity (Singh & Chouhan, 2023).

According to Harris (2024), effective leadership improves employee morale, fosters motivation, enhances cooperation, aligns work with individual capabilities, provides clear guidance, and facilitates effective communication. Leadership remains critical to organizational survival and performance, with growing organizations facing increased demands for effective leadership to meet heightened expectations. Evidence strongly suggests a direct correlation between leadership styles and employee performance in organizations in schools (Thomas, 2023).

A school is an institution established for the purpose of teaching and learning. It is a place where students are refined and where formal education is given to the youths and members of the society. The successful coordination of instructional and administrative tasks within the school system depends largely on human factors. In the secondary school system there are two categories of human factors that render educational services in the teaching and non-teaching staff. Secondary school principals are the most senior members of the teaching staff that are appointed to pilot the affairs of the school by virtue of their qualifications, intelligence or knowledge and teaching experience. They are the chief executive officers or administrators that occupy the apex position in the organizational structure of the school. School principals could also be regarded as the key officers responsible for making significant decisions and

coordinating activities essential for achieving school goals and leaderships (Miller & Thompson, 2022).

Leadership involves inspiring and mobilizing individuals to take collective action towards achieving common goals (Bright, 2023). Similarly, leadership serves as a pivotal tool in motivating individuals to willingly and enthusiastically contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2023). Effective leadership plays a central role in the success of any organization, as the outcomes of programmes or initiatives are significantly influenced by the leadership approach adopted. Across private and public sectors, including educational institutions, leadership is essential in ensuring that organizational activities are aligned with the broader mission and strategic goals of leaders (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Such leaders coordinate human and material resources (such as the necessary machinery) or arrangements put in place so that two or more people or groups of people can work together properly and harmoniously.

According to Jerab & Mabrouk (2023), leadership encompasses a set of mind-sets and behaviours that align people in a collective direction, enabling them to work together and accomplish shared goals, and helping them adjust to changing environments. Thus, a principal synchronizes school resources, instructional facilities, coordinates schedules and subordinates under his or her jurisdiction of authority/control for optimal performance of jobs. Therefore, the main job of a principal is to assist in leading, directing, and coordinating various activities inside the college. The primary responsibility of the principal is to create and sustain an excellent teaching-learning environment for the educational programmes running in the college. The principal is also responsible to support the teachers in their teaching practices.

Principals have a critical role to play in achieving the institution's goals and objectives. Among these responsibilities, principals must give genuine and effective leadership, resulting in improved professional presentation among teachers. The principal is responsible to give highly valued visions that are focused on their day-to-day methods and that serve to foster a good culture that is supportive of exceptional teacher performance and thus school organisational performance (Saleem et al., 2020). Consequently, the concern of this researchers is to critically examine principals' leadership styles and their organisational performance in public secondary schools in Bwari Area Council in the FCT.

Statement of the Problem

In any educational institution, leaders such as school principals are inevitable because they play significant roles in the effectiveness of a school programme. Principals are therefore expected to adopt a transformational leadership style that will influence the needs of their subordinates (the teachers), motivate them to work, employ and vary diverse leadership style to suit different situations, as the needs arise and considering the effects on the followers. How the principals are effectively playing these roles has been a matter of concern to many educational stakeholders. Thus, ineffective use of leadership styles by school principals may negatively affect the organisation of secondary schools all over the globe. To this end, principals need to effectively organise their various schools by effectively supervising, planning, organising, and coordinating teachers' activities so as to help them achieve high level of school organisation that could facilitate the realization of improved students' academic performance.

Besides, this study is proposed to measure the impact of different principal leadership styles on school organisation currently serving in public secondary schools in Bwari, Abuja. This is done because most of the studies in this regard have largely focused on principals' leadership styles and how they affect the performance of teachers. Thus, extensive research has been conducted to explore this phenomenon across various perspectives and contexts; however, significant gaps in understanding remain (Iskandar et al, 2023; Warman et al 2022; Obadimeji & Oredein, 2022). For instance, little is known about the effect of principals' leadership styles on school organisation. This has thus led to a dearth of knowledge in the literature. Therefore, this study will fill this knowledge gap by examining the effect of leadership styles of principals and schools' organisational performance by studying selected secondary schools in Bwari Area Council in Abuja, FCT. Specifically, the study will assess the effect of democratic leadership style, autocratic leadership style and liaises-faire leadership style on the organisation of the selected secondary schools in Bwari Area Council in Abuja

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the effect of democratic leadership style of principals on the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja,

FCT?

2. How does autocratic leadership style of principals affect the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT?
3. Is there a significant relationship between liaises-faire leadership style of principals and the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. H_{01} : Democratic leadership style of principals has no significant effect on the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT?

2. H_{02} : Autocratic leadership of principals has no significant effect on the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT?

3. H_{03} : Liaises-faire leadership style of principals has no significant effect on the organization of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT?

Understanding the concept of leadership and the role of leaders

Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and followers where the leader attempts to influence followers to achieve a common goal. The term “Leadership” has long been in existence among people, and it has so many interpretations; it has been defined in terms of traits, behaviours, influence, interaction, patterns, role, relationships, and occupation of an administrative position. Leadership has also been seen as a dynamic process in a group where one individual influences the others to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group tasks in a given situation (Eide et al. 2020).

Leadership has generated excitement and interest since ancient times. Conventionally, when people think about leadership, images come to mind of

powerful dynamic individuals who command victorious armies, shape the events of nations, develop religions, or direct corporate empires (Anukaenyi, 2022). However, there was sharp interest from the 20th century as researchers attempted to scientifically generate answers to many questions surrounding the mystery of leadership. Leadership today, is increasingly associated with the concept of team work, getting along with other people, stimulating and creating a vision which others can identify rather than command and control.

Eke (2024) opined that leadership is a dynamic process involving the unequal distribution of power between leaders and group members. While group members hold some power, leaders typically possess greater influence, enabling them to drive change within an organization. Leaders are described as agents of transformation, significantly impacting others while being less affected by the actions of those they lead. According to Eide et al. (2020), leadership entails the use of deliberate and strategic methods to inspire and motivate individuals, creating an environment that nurtures their potential for growth and professional development within an organization. Effective leadership goes beyond directing tasks; it focuses on building a shared vision, empowering team members, and fostering a sense of purpose.

Fundamentally, leadership can be defined as the ability to influence and guide others -whether through personal example, communication, or strategic actions encouraging them to willingly collaborate and contribute toward the attainment of collective objectives. Leadership encompasses a process of exerting positive influence over other persons. Leadership is the ability of a manager to influence subordinates to work with zeal and confidence; zeal reflects order, earnestness, and intensity in the execution of work, while confidence reflects experience and technical ability (Gupta et al, 2024). Managers are not expected to know everything, which is why they rely on knowledgeable and competent employees (Hajiali et al, 2022)

Democratic leadership style invites the participation of staff members and others, not only in decision making, but in shaping the organization's vision. It allows everyone to express opinions about how things should be done, and where the organization should go. By bringing in everyone's ideas, it enriches the organization's possibilities. However, it still leaves the ultimate decision-making regarding the implementation of those ideas in the hands of a single individual (Eke, 2024). In sum, using this style is of mutual benefit, because employees can become a part of the team and, on the other hand, leaders can make better decisions.

Democratic leadership, with its focus on equality and collaboration, fosters stronger relationships across all organizational levels (Eide, et al 2020). In contrast to more hierarchical structures, where social interactions between clerical staff and administrators are rare, democratic leadership encourages greater interpersonal communication and camaraderie (Adamu et al., 2024). This inclusiveness not only helps employees feel valued when their input is sought, it also increases their sense of ownership when their ideas are incorporated into final decisions (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Specific performance outcomes through a system of rewards and punishments, characterized by an emphasis on compliance and efficiency, transactional leaders utilize contingent rewards and corrective measures to uphold order within the school environment.

A leadership style provides clear structures and expectations, leading to efficiency in task completion (Bada et al., 2024). However, the emphasis on compliance and performance metrics can stifle creativity and discourage risk-taking among staff, hindering the school's ability to adapt to new educational challenges (Bada et al 2024; John & Mkulu, 2020). Transactional leaders are often associated with an ethic of utilitarianism, where decision-making centres on pragmatic benefits to maximize school productivity, resulting in viewing school members as resources to be efficiently managed (Bada et al., 2024). While effective for achieving immediate goals, transactional leadership may lack the long-term vision necessary for sustainable growth and adaptability within schools. The approach ensures that the benefits of laissez-faire leadership are maximized while mitigating its potential drawbacks, also limit creativity and adaptability, making it challenging to address evolving educational needs (Hood, 2024; Gupta et al., 2024).

Methodology

This study used a survey research design. The survey is defined as a system for collecting specific information from and also on some people to describe, compare, and explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. The population for the study comprised all the principals and teachers in Bwari secondary schools in the FCT. According to the FCT Education Management Information System (FCT EMIS), there are 11 public secondary schools in Bwari. Hence, these 11 public secondary schools in Bwari formed the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique:

Out of the 11 public secondary schools in Bwari, a total of 5 secondary schools were randomly selected for the study. Consequently, 5 respondents made up of twenty teachers and a principal and an Assistant Principal were selected from each of the sampled schools using purposive random sampling technique. This gives a total of 110 respondents.

Research Instrument(s):

The study used copies of questionnaire to collect data from respondents that was useful for the study to reach research findings. The questionnaire is structured and measured in 5 point Likert scale ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. A five-point Likert-type scale was employed to enhance response rate and quality while minimizing respondents' frustration, as suggested by recent studies on survey methodologies (Sullivan & Artino, 2023).

Validity and Reliability of the instruments:

The instrument used for the study was subjected to pilot testing to ascertain its reliability and validity using composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as suggested by Cheung et al, 2024, should be above 0.5, while composite reliability coefficient should be above 0.7 (also Shrestha, 2021).

The finding of the pilot testing showed that the research instrument was reliable and valid, if the composite reliability coefficient is above 0.81 while AVE is above 0.5.

Procedure for Data Collection:

The researcher, with the help of a trained Research Assistant, administered the questionnaire to teachers and principals respectively. The researcher, along with the trained Research Assistant, went back to collect the completed questionnaire from Teachers and Principal.

Methods of Data Analysis:

The Smart PLS 2.0 was used in this work (Shrestha, 2021). Many reasons for using PLS include: flexible restrictions with respect to population distribution, as well as more reliable and accurate computations of moderating effects due to

its ability to account for error, which can reduce possible relationships as well as improve the validity of the theory (Cheung et al, 2024).

Results

Multicollinearity Test

The study utilized Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to test for multicollinearity. A VIF figure ≥ 5 shows serious multicollinearity (Cheng et al 2022). There was no problem of multicollinearity as all VIF figure in Table 3 are below 5.

Table 3
Multicollinearity Statistics: VIF Values

Construct	Tolerance	VIF
Democratic Leadership	0.34	2.93
Autocratic Leadership	0.31	3.22
Laissez-faire Leadership	0.50	1.98

Table 4

Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
School Organisation	SO1	0.88	0.62	0.87
	SO2	0.83		
	SO3	0.73		
	SO4	0.68		
Democratic Leadership	DL1	0.74	0.53	0.81
	DL2	0.84		
	DL3	0.61		
	DL4	0.68		
Laissez-faire Leadership	LL1	0.86	0.58	0.80
	LL2	0.71		
	LL3	0.69		
Autocratic Leadership	AL1	0.74	0.72	0.91
	AL2	0.93		
	AL3	0.96		
	AL4	0.75		

Note: Some items were deleted due to insufficient loadings. AVE stands for Average Variance Extracted while CR represents Composite Reliability.

According to Haji-Othman et al (2022), loadings should not be below 0.5. On Table 4, it is seen that all items loaded above 0.5. This means all the items on Table 2 were retained. However, some items were deleted due to insufficient loadings. Similarly, on Table 4, all constructs have a composite reliability coefficient greater than 0.7 and all constructs met the minimum benchmark for AVE, which is 0.5 (Haji-Othman et al, 2022). This means the data collected are valid and reliable. The data were next tested for discriminant validity. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 5

Discriminate Validity using Fornell-larcker criterion

		1	2	3	4
1	Democratic Leadership	0.72			
2	Laissez Faire Leadership	0.53	0.79		
3	Autocratic Leadership	0.55	0.57	0.89	
4	Employee Productivity	0.34	0.28	0.37	0.95

Note: The bolded diagonal numbers represents the square root of the AVE of each latent construct.

Table 5 presents the result of discriminant validity. The numbers that are bolded represent the square root of AVE of each latent variable. The square root of the AVE for employee well-being is 0.72. All other correlations below employee well-being are below 0.72. The square root of the AVE of employee performance is 0.79; all other correlations with employee performance are below 0.79. The square root of the AVE of compensation is 0.89; all other correlations with compensation are below 0.89. Finally, the square of the AVE of training and career development is 0.95; all other correlations with training and career development are below 0.95.

Based on the result on Table 5, it can be concluded that the data show discriminant validity using the Fornell-larcker discriminant validity criterion. It is important to carry out a bootstrapping analysis to determine the direct effect of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variable of the study. Bootstrapping was done by using 5000 subsamples using 105 cases, thus, testing hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 of the study. Table 6 presents the result of the test of the hypotheses:

Table 6
Path Coefficient

Hypotheses	Beta Value	Standard Error	T Stat	P Value	Decision
H01: DL->SOP	0.28	0.07	4.03***	0.00	Rejected
H02: AL->SOP	-0.27	0.08	-3.34***	0.00	Rejected
H03: LL-SOP	0.19	0.06	3.06***	0.00	Rejected
R Square	51%				

*** p< 0.01; **p< 0.05; *p <0.1

Democratic Leadership (DL) has a significant relationship with School Organisation Performance (SOP) in secondary schools in Bwari. It is seen on Table 6 that principals' democratic leadership is significantly related to school organisation performance at less than 1 per cent ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.01$). Therefore, H01 that states democratic leadership style of principals has no significant effect on the organisation of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council is statistically rejected.

Similarly, Autocratic Leadership (AL) has significant relationship with School Organisation Performance (SOP) in secondary schools in Bwari ($\beta=-0.27$, $p<0.01$). Consequently, H02 that states that autocratic leadership of principals has no significant effect on the organisation of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council is empirically rejected. Finally, principals' laissez faire leadership is significantly related to the School Organisation Performance (SOP) in secondary schools in Bwari less than 1 percent ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.01$). As a result, H03 that states liaises-faire leadership style of principals has no significant effect on the organisation of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council rejected.

Adjusted R square is 57%, meaning 57% variance in the school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari accounted for by democratic leadership, autocratic leadership and laissez faire leadership. Table 7 was used to determine the effect of size of the independent variables on the dependent variable of the study. Effect sizes of the variables were assessed through f2.

Table 7
Effect Size

Construct	f2	Effect Size
Principals' Democratic Leadership	0.10	Small
Principals' Autocratic Leadership	0.10	Small
Principals' Laissez Faire Leadership	0.05	Small

Table 7 shows the effect size of principals' democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, and laissez faire leadership. All of the independent variables have small effect sizes on the dependent variable, school organisation performance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are based on statistical data analyses and hypotheses tested. Findings from the study revealed that principals' democratic leadership style has a positive and significant effect on school organisation performance in secondary schools in Bwari. This was further validated by Oussible et al (2022) who discoursed that democratic leadership does significantly influence the performance of employees in organisations. On the contrary, the findings from the study revealed that autocratic leadership is a significant predictor of school organisation performance in secondary schools in Bwari. However, increase in autocratic leadership will lead to a reduction in the school organisation performance in secondary schools in Bwari, as the two are negatively related. These findings correspond with the findings of Anukaenyi, (2022).

Finally, the findings from the study revealed that principals' laissez faire leadership has a positive and significant influence on the school organisation performance in secondary schools in Bwari. As such, increase in principals' laissez faire leadership will lead to a corresponding increase in school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council in the FCT. These findings corroborate with the work of Kostiainen, (2023)

Summary

This study investigated whether a significant relationship exists between principals' leadership style and school organisation performance in public secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT. The population for the study comprised all the principals and teachers in Bwari Secondary Schools in the FCT. Out of 11 public senior secondary schools in Bwari, a total of 5 secondary schools were selected from the Area Council using proportional sampling techniques.

On the other hand, the respondents made up of twenty teachers, a principal, and an Assistant Principal were selected from each of the sampled schools using random sampling technique. This gives a total of 110 respondents. Data were collected from the respondents using copies of questionnaire.

The research hypotheses of the study include determining whether principals' democratic leadership styles, autocratic leadership styles and laissez faire leadership styles have significant influence on school organisation performance in Bwari Area Council in the FCT. Results indicate that, there was

significant relationship between principals' democratic leadership styles, autocratic leadership styles and laissez faire leadership styles and school organisation performance of Secondary Schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT.

Based on the analysed data, the following are the summary of the major findings of the study:

1. Principals' democratic leadership style has a significant effect on school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT
2. Principals' autocratic leadership style has a significant effect on school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT
3. Principals' laissez faire leadership style has a significant effect on school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that principals' democratic leadership style, autocratic leadership style and laissez faire leadership style all have significant effect on school organisation performance of secondary schools in Bwari. However, the study concluded that both principals' democratic leadership style and laissez faire leadership style have positive effect on school organisation performance, while principals' autocratic leadership style has a negative influence on school organisation performance. That is to say that increase in principals' autocratic leadership style will lead to a decrease in school organisation performance and vice versa.

Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. To encourage open communication and dialogue between staff, students, and parents to ensure that everyone's ideas and opinions are heard and valued.
2. Incorporate team-based decision-making in order to ensure that each person is heard and given a chance to contribute.
3. To facilitate conversations where everyone can engage and express their opinions without fear of criticism or judgment.

4. To utilize democratic leadership style to empower staff and students to take ownership of their tasks and activities.
5. Allow staff and students to take initiative in their work and suggest new ideas and solutions to problems.

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