

## LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC IDAH, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The role and importance of leadership in an organization cannot be overemphasized. Leadership style is a key determinant of the success or failure of any organization. Hence, the major objective of this study was to determine the impact of leadership style on staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey design was used for this study. The population comprised of eighty (80) academic staff of the Polytechnic. A sample of sixty-seven (67) was drawn using the Taro Yamane's formula for population sample size. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. It was found that effective leadership style improves staff performance. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the current curriculum of public administration in schools be reviewed to incorporate effective leadership education. Specialized leadership training programme be organized for administrative heads to update their knowledge on leadership.*

**Key words:** Leadership, Leadership Style and Staff Productivity

### **INTRODUCTION**

The term leadership is a relative concept depending on the perspective from which one looks at it. It is a key factor that contributes in no small measure to the success or failure of an organization or a group. Leadership could make or mar the progress, continued existence, growth and survival of any kind of group or organization where human beings are involved. The role, necessity and importance of leadership anywhere, any day and anytime cannot be overemphasized.

Leadership is a state or position of being a leader. Inyang (2004) defined leadership as a process which involves the use of non-coercive influence to shape a group or organizational goals, motivate behaviour towards achieving the goals as well as define the group's culture. A leader is a person, one who influences, directs, and motivates others to perform specific tasks and inspire his subordinates for efficient performance towards the accomplishment of corporate goals. According to Wiza and Hlanganipai (2014) and Atmojo (2015), leadership is a process of influencing others' commitment towards realizing their full potential in achieving a value-added, shared vision, with passion and integrity. The nature of this influence is such that the members of the team cooperate voluntarily with each other in order to achieve the objectives which the leader has set for each member, as well as for the group. Therefore, leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Leadership style in an

organization is one of the factors that play significant role in enhancing or retarding the interest and commitment of the individuals in the organization (Obiwuru, Okwu, & Akpa, 2011).

Leadership is a critical management skill, involving the ability to encourage a group of people towards common goal. It focuses on the development of followers and their needs. Good motivation, friendly work environment, proper compensation and efficient communication between managers and subordinates play an important role in promoting this goal. Planning and organization of work is also very crucial in organizational attainment. The development of organization has certain factors that improve sustainability on the basis of effectiveness and efficiency. The improvement in productivity leads to employees' better behaviour and commitment (Ukaidi & Bassey, 2016).

Organizations look for managers who can manage effectively and efficiently. But each manager is unique with his or her style of leadership depending on the situation. Leadership style is the pattern of thinking, feeling and behaviour that a leader uses to deal with people and situation. There are various leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic and laissez faire (Nwachukwu, 2000). Leadership is the core and Nervous system in organizational solvency (Adebakin 1996). Effective and efficient leadership leads to more productivity and profitability, while the reverse is the case. Leadership is viewed as a social influence process through which one individual exerts influence intentionally over others to structure the behaviours and relationship within a group or organizations.

From the above proceedings, it then follows that leadership occurs when one person influences others to willingly perform above the minimum requirement of their work. Organizations productivity is dependent on the leadership style adopted. In 1953, an empirical research conducted by Levin and White on leadership style, identified three major styles of leadership: Autocratic leader, Laissez faire leader and Democratic leader.

### Statement of the Problem

According to Osmond (2015), leadership is a learning process that is not only centered on what needs to be said but also in learning how to say it in ways that others can understand and follow. Kouzes and Posner (1988) on the other hand saw leadership as an ongoing process of building and sustaining a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those willing to follow. However, most organizations do not pay serious attention to the issue of leadership considering its delicate and important roles. Instead, they pay much attention or place more emphasis on profit maximization relegating leadership based issues to the background. A large number of organizations spend huge amount on solving leadership problems. Several organizations today have the problem of leadership and the style to be adopted in leading employees. Some leaders don't know what important position they occupy in the organization while some who know do not possess the requisite skill or style to manage followers. The inevitable consequence of this is disharmony, lack of team work and low productivity. From the foregoing therefore, this paper shall interrogate;

1. Whether autocratic leadership style has a positive effect on the performance of staff in Federal Polytechnic Idah.
2. The effects of democratic leadership style on the performance of staff in Federal Polytechnic Idah.
3. The effects of liaises-fair leadership style on the performance of staff in Federal Polytechnic Idah.

### Conceptualization

**Leadership** is the process of influencing others towards organizational performance and achievement of goals or a process of influencing group activity towards achievement. While **leadership styles** are the behavioral patterns that a leader adopt to influence the behavior of his followers, i.e. the way he gives directions to his subordinates and motivates them to accomplish the given objectives. **Staff Productivity** on

the other hand is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. Productivity may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time.

### **Autocratic Leadership Style**

According to Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh and Hashmi (2012) in autocratic leadership style, the leader is very conscious of his position. He has little trust and faith in his subordinates and he feels that “pay” is a just reward for work and is the only reward that will motivate a worker. An autocratic leader gives orders and demands that they be carried out. No questions are allowed and no explanation given. The group members ensure no responsibility for performance and merely do what they are told. Consequently production is good when the leader is present, but drops in his absence.

### **Laissez faire Leadership Style**

In the laissez faire style, the leader has no confidence in his leadership ability. He does not get goals for the group and decision making is performed by whoever in the group is willing to accept it. According to Northhouse, (2010) in Courville (2011), under laissez faire leadership style, productivity is generally low and work is sloppy. The group has little interest in their work morale and team work which are generally low. This is because of the ‘I don’t care’ attitude of leaders to their subordinates.

### **Democratic Leadership Style**

In a democratic leadership style, there is a good relationship between the leader and his followers. Here, decision making is shared by the leaders and members of the group. Under democratic leadership style, criticism and praise are objectively given. A feeling of responsibility is developed within the group which in turn enhances productivity. Performances are usually high. New ideas and changes are developed.

To increase the organizational performance a leader must have the ability to promote creativity and innovation, stimulate the subordinates to challenge their own value systems and improve their individual performance (Ishaq 2008).

### **Review of Related Literature**

Leadership as a concept has been defined by so many writers. Ngoka (2002) in Akor (2014) defined leadership as the process of influencing others towards organizational performance and achievement of goals. According to Igbo (2002) in Akor (2014), leadership is a process of influencing group activity towards achievement. It is the behaviour of an individual when he is directing and guiding the activities of the group towards a common goal. His success or failure in attaining the goals of the organization depends largely on his ability to effectively organize and manipulate the human and material resources available to him. This in turn depends on his leadership styles. Hermann and Post (2005) refer to leadership style as the pattern of behaviour use by a leader in attempting to influence group members and make decision regarding the mission strategy and operation of group activities.

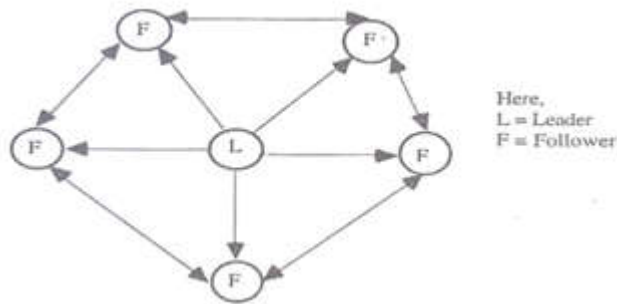
Sosik and Godshalk (2000) perceived leadership style as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Smith and Rhode (1989) defined job performance as an act of performing a job either well or badly. They opined that job performance has to do with the employees’ strength and weaknesses in his effort to accomplish task.

### **Democratic leadership style and organizational performance**

According to (Ray and Ray 2012), the democratic leadership style is a very open and collegial style of running a team. Ideas move freely amongst the group and are discussed openly. Everyone is given a seat at the table, and discussion is relatively free-flowing. Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process. Researchers like Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh & Hashmi (2012); Ojokuku & Odetayo (2012); Ukaidi (2016) have shown that democratic leadership style leads to higher productivity, better

contributions from group members and increased group morale. Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan and then vote on the best course of action.

**Figure: 1 Democratic Leadership**



**Source:** [www.adu-article.blogspot.com](http://www.adu-article.blogspot.com)

Anderson (1959); Klinker (2006) and Teles (2015); identified the democratic leader as an individual who shares decision making with the other members and therefore, democratic leadership is connected with higher morale in the majority of the situations. Allmendinger and Hackman (1996) supported Anderson's explanation of the relationship between democratic leadership and productivity. Although the significant drawbacks to democratic leadership are time consuming activities and lengthy debate over policy, participation plays a key role for increasing the productivity of leadership (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). The democratic leadership style is also called the participative style as it encourages employees to be a part of the decision making.

**Figure 3: Democratic Leadership**



**Source:** [www.adu-article.blogspot.com](http://www.adu-article.blogspot.com)

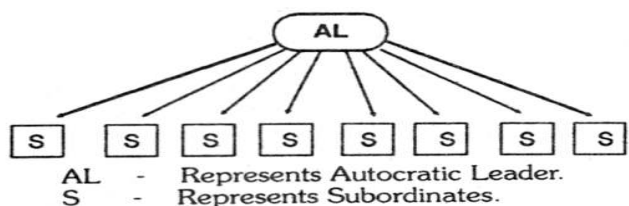
The democratic manager always encourages joint and collective solutions as can be seen in the above diagram. Democratic leadership can produce high quality and high quantity work for long periods of time. Democratic leadership should not be used when: There is not enough time to get everyone's input. It's easier and more cost-effective for the manager to make the decision. The business can't afford mistakes. The manager feels threatened by this type of leadership. Employee safety is a critical concern. The benefits of democratic leadership cannot be overemphasized because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Group members also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results (Kendra 2016). However, in situations where roles are unclear or time is of the essence,

democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects. In some cases, group members may not have the necessary knowledge or expertise to make quality contributions to the decision-making process.

### Autocratic Leadership Style and Organizational Performance

Autocratic leadership, also known as authoritarian leadership, is a leadership style characterized by individual control over all decisions and little or no input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their own ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice from followers. Autocratic leadership involves absolute, authoritarian control over a group (Van Vugt, Jepson and Hart 2014).

**Figure 2: Autocratic Leadership Style**



**Source:** [www.adu-article.blogspot.com](http://www.adu-article.blogspot.com)

Autocratic leadership can be beneficial in some instances, such as when decisions need to be made quickly without consulting with a large group of people. Some projects require strong leadership in order to get things accomplished quickly and efficiently. In situations that are particularly stressful, such as during military conflicts, group members may actually prefer an autocratic style. It allows members of the group to focus on performing specific tasks without worrying about making complex decisions. In a contrary development, there are many instances where this leadership style can be problematic. People who abuse an autocratic leadership style are often viewed as bossy, controlling and dictatorial, which can lead to resentment among group members. Because autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting the group, people in the group may dislike that they are unable to contribute ideas. Subordinates are also not informed about why they are asked to do a particular work i.e., the purpose for which the work is required to be performed. According to Mgbodile (2004), Basit, Sebastian and Hassan (2017) an autocratic leader is a leader who is high-handed in his administration. He believes his ideas and thoughts to be superior to those of his subordinates and considers involving them in decision-making as a waste of time. According to Vliert (2006), an autocratic leader has little or no trust and faith in his or her subordinates; he takes decision alone; gives order and command without considering the subordinates; determines group policy; gives step by step directions and dictates task; believes he is always right and entertains no question from subordinates.

### Laissez-Fair Leadership and Organizational Performance

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines laissez-faire leadership as: “A philosophy or practice characterized by a usually deliberate abstention from direction or interference, especially with individual freedom of choice and action.” This self-rule style empowers individuals, groups or teams to make decisions. Critics of this hands-off leadership style contend it is risky to universally delegate decision-making responsibility to staff members. Laissez fair style is evasion of responsibilities and avoidance of decision making. Leaders let group members make all decision”. The concept of laissez was also given by Osborn as “Abdication of responsibilities and avoiding decisions” (Osborn, 2008).

The laissez-faire leadership style is also known as the "hands-off" style. It is one in which the manager provides little or no direction and gives employees as much freedom as possible. Leaders who adopt the laissez-faire leadership style exercise little control over the followers and let the followers have freedom to carry out their assigned tasks without direct supervision (Wu & Shiu, 2009). The laissez faire leader delegates decision-making to the group and agrees to abide by their resolutions.

According to Kendra (2016), laissez-faire leadership can be effective in situations where group members are highly skilled, motivated and capable of working on their own. Since these group members are experts and have the knowledge and skills to work independently, they are capable of accomplishing tasks with very little or no guidance. This autonomy can be freeing to some group members and help them feel more satisfied with their work. The laissez-faire style can be used in situations where followers have a high-level of passion and intrinsic motivation for their work. Notwithstanding the foregoing, one criticism of the laissez-faire leadership style is that it tends to favour success oriented people rather than those who solve society's most pressing problems. In other words, laissez-faire leadership tends to serve the needs of the people who most benefit from it. This can be counterintuitive to the objectives of corporate responsibility. Other management models, like servant leadership, focus on good corporate citizenship. The objective is to serve the needs of customers, communities and disenfranchised groups.

### **Methodology**

Survey design was considered appropriate for the study. The study elicited opinions of the subjects on the impact of leadership style on organizational productivity in Federal Polytechnic Idah. The survey design will be adopted because the research centers on people, their beliefs, opinions, attitude and behaviours by providing answers to the following research questions:

- 1 To what extent does autocratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah?
- 2 To what extent does democratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah?
- 3 To what extent does liaises-faire leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah?

### **Method of Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data collected, both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used. The mean was used to answer the research questions on a five point rating scale.

### **Area of Study**

The area of study is Federal Polytechnic Idah. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of three parts (A, B and C) with structured question items on a five-point rating scale.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

### Research Question 1

*Mean ratings of staff responses on the extent to which autocratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah.*

Table 1.1

Statements	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev	Remark
Employees need to be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work	1.69	.125	.975	Rejected
It is fair to say that most employees in the general population are lazy	1.59	.097	.761	Rejected
As a rule, employees must be given rewards of punishments in order to motivate them to achieve organizational goals	1.70	.150	1.174	Rejected
Most employees feel insecure about their work and need direction.	2.23	.182	1.419	Rejected
The leader is the chief of the achievement of members of the group	1.64	.126	.984	Rejected
Effective leaders give orders and clarify procedures.	2.16	.172	1.344	Rejected
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>1.11</b>	

The table (1) above shows the analyses of data in respect of the extent to which autocratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah with a grand mean of 1.83 which is quite below the cutoff point of 3.50 while other clusters in the table have the following means: Employees need to be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work (1.69), It is fair to say that most employees in the general population are lazy (1.59), As a rule, employees must be given rewards of punishments in order to motivate them to achieve organizational goals (1.70), Most employees feel insecure about their work and need direction (2.23), The leader is the chief of the achievement of members of the group (1.64), Effective leaders give orders and clarify procedures (2.16). These sets of data show that the autocratic style of leadership does not improve staff productivity in Federal Polytechnic Idah.

### Research Question 2

*Mean ratings of staff responses on the extent to which democratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah.*

Table 2

Statements	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev	Remark
Employees need to be part of decision making process in the organization.	4.82	.050	.388	Accepted
Providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader.	4.69	.092	.720	Accepted
Most workers want frequent and supportive communication from their leaders.	4.56	.076	.592	Accepted
Leaders need to help subordinates accept responsibilities for completing their work	4.36	.134	1.049	Accepted
It is the leader's job to help subordinates find their "passion".	4.28	.112	.878	Accepted
People are basically competent and if given a task will do a good job.	3.98	.174	1.360	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.83</b>	

The able (2) above shows the analyses of data in respect of the extent to which democratic leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah with a grand mean of 4.45 which is quite above the set cutoff point of 3.50. Individual clusters in the table have the following corresponding means accordingly: Employees need to be part of decision making process in the organization (4.82), providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader. (4.69), most workers want frequent and supportive communication from their leaders (4.56), Leaders need to help subordinates accept responsibilities for completing their work (4.36), it is the leader's job to help subordinates find their "passion" (4.28), People are basically competent and if given a task will do a good job (3.98). The group of data in the table above shows that the democratic style of leadership will improve staff productivity in Federal Polytechnic Idah.

### Research Question 3

*Mean ratings of staff responses on the extent to which laissez-fair leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah.*

**Table 3**

Statements	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev	Remarks
In complex situations, leaders should let subordinates work out problems on their own.	1.41	.085	.668	Rejected
Leadership requires staying out of the way of subordinates as they do their work.	1.89	.138	1.082	Rejected
Leaders should allow subordinates to appraise their own work.	1.87	.180	1.408	Rejected
Leaders should give subordinates complete freedom to solve problems on their own.	1.21	.058	.451	Rejected
In most situations, workers prefer little input from the leader.	2.03	.153	1.197	Rejected
In general, it is better to leave subordinates alone.	1.30	.059	.460	Rejected
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.62</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.88</b>	

Table (3) above presents the analyses of data collected regarding the extent to which laissez-fair leadership style improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah. After analysis, the above set of data showed a grand mean of 1.62 which is apparently below the cutoff point of 3.50. Separate questionnaire items (clusters) in the table have their respective means as follow: In complex situations, leaders should let subordinates work out problems on their own (1.41), Leadership requires staying out of the way of subordinates as they do their work (1.89), Leaders should allow subordinates to appraise their own work (1.87), Leaders should give subordinates complete freedom to solve problems on their own (1.21), In most situations, workers prefer little input from the leader (2.03), In general, it is better to leave subordinates alone (1.30). The group of data in the table above shows that the laissez-fair leadership style will not improve staff productivity in Federal Polytechnic Idah.

### Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of data, the major findings of this study are summarized as below:

1. That autocratic leadership style does not improve staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah because it makes leaders to be bossy, controlling and dictatorial, which can lead to resentment among group members because autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting the group, people in the group may dislike that they are unable to contribute ideas. This will in turn dwindle subordinates commitment, efficiency and performance in the institution.



2. That democratic leadership style will improve organizational performance in Democratic leadership style encourages employees to be a part of the decision making and encourages joint and collective solutions. It also keeps employees informed about everything that affects their work and shares decision making and problem solving responsibilities. It creates job satisfaction, since a sense of autonomy, control and participation is fostered within the democratic leadership style. Greater participation from employees during the decision-making process could also result in more creative solutions and greater innovation to address problems and serve the organization better.

3. That laissez-faire leadership style has no positive effect on staff performance in Federal Polytechnic Idah. Laissez-faire leaders are characterized as uninvolved with their followers and members; in fact, laissez-faire leadership is an absence of leadership style. Leaders of this style make no policies or group-related decisions. Under laissez faire leadership style, productivity is generally low and work is sloppy. The group has little interest in their work morale and team work which are generally low. Laissez-faire leadership is not ideal in situations where group members lack the knowledge or experience they need to complete tasks and make decisions.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that leadership styles could make or mar or effective staff performance in an organization. The three main leadership styles covered in this study include: the autocratic, democratic and liaises-fare leadership styles. Out of the trio of leadership styles, only the democratic style of leadership has positive effect and can positively improve staff performance in an organization. While the autocratic and liaises-fare leadership styles do not improve but rather will retard staff performance. The findings of this study if properly utilized by the major stake holders in education, administration and leadership in Federal Polytechnic Idah and the nation in general would help improve leadership pattern and staff performance which will inevitably improve efficiency and productivity. From the foregoing, findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The current curriculum of public administration in schools should be reviewed to incorporate effective leadership education and training. Emphasis should also be laid on the negative effects of autocratic style of leadership.
2. Specialized leadership training programme should be organized for administrative heads to enable them update their knowledge on productive leadership styles that comply with global best practices with a view to improve staff performance.
3. Staff should be given the opportunity to appraise their leaders, rate and recommend them for promotions or upgrades when and where necessary.
4. Leaders should learn to adopt democratic style of leadership because it is more productive and encouraging both to the employees and the organization in general.
5. The autocratic and liaises-fare leadership styles should be disregarded and discouraged by organizations as these styles lower staff morale, kill efficiency and reduce staff performance.

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