

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

¹Durowoju, S. T., ²Abdul-Azeez, I. A. and ³Bolarinwa, S. A.

^{1&2}Dept. of Business Administration and Mgt Tech. ³Dept. of Accounting and Finance
Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of different leadership styles (democratic, charismatic, visionary, transformational, transactional and autocratic) on three measures of organizational performance (financial performance, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction) in some selected service companies in Lagos metropolis using mid level managers. The service companies surveyed cut across Transport, Hotel, Insurance, Marketing and Airline. Random sampling technique was applied in selecting 200 respondents for this study. Out of which 118 copies of questionnaire were found valid and analyzable representing 59% response rate. The results of the Regression analysis show a clear relationship between some leadership styles and organizational performance. Specifically, the study revealed that democratic, visionary, charismatic and transformational leadership styles have significant positive relation to organizational performance, especially financial performance and employee satisfaction. Based on the findings of this study, avenue for further research in this area was formulated also implication of the study was stated.

Keywords: Leadership, Style, Performance, Organization

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been recognized as a critical concepts related to the effective functioning of any organization. It is the most talked about activity in any organization because of its coverage of full range of managerial responsibilities which include planning, decision making, communicating, controlling and conflict management (Vankovich, 2007). A change in leadership usually generates a lot of interest because leadership is one of the most popular explanations for the success or failure of an organization.

Leadership according to Kouzes and Posner (1995) is the art of mobilizing others to achieve organizational aspirations. They explain further that a leader is like a coach that performs the art of carefully putting the followers through in order to navigate from unknown to known. Elenkov (2002) observed that leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen. Wang *et al* (2010) view leadership as a process by which one person influences the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of others. They observe that leaders set direction for the followers; they see what lies ahead; they visualize what needed to be achieved; and they inspire and encourage the followers. Aworemi *et al* (2009) described leadership as a process of social influence in which one person seek for support and aid of others in the achievement and accomplishment of a common goals or objectives. They posited that effective leader must have the ability to integrate and maximize available resources within the internal and external environment for the attainment of organizational goals.

Several studies have proposed that there should be a relationship between leadership and performance. The first reason relates to practice. Today's intensive, dynamic markets feature innovation-based competition, price/performance rivalry, decreasing returns, and the creative destruction of existing competencies (Santora *et al*, 1999). McGrath and Macmillan (2000) observed that effective leadership behaviours can facilitate the improvement of performance when organizations face new challenges. Zhu *et al* (2005) in their research noted that leadership is one of the key driving forces for improving a firm's performance. Effective leadership is seen as a potent source of management development and sustained competitive advantage for organizational performance improvement (Rowe 2001). Sun (2002) compared the leadership style with the performance in schools and enterprises, and showed that the leadership style has a significantly positive correlation with the organizational performance in both schools and enterprises. Elenkov (2002) believed that leadership style should be properly and carefully used to guide and motivate subordinates. Avolio *et al* (1988) have shown that there is a relationship between charismatic leadership and company profits in a business game played by MBA students.

Also, Wang *et al* (2010) examined the relationship among leadership style, the organizational performance and human resource management strategy. They measured organizational performance by financial performance, Business performance and organizational effectiveness. Leadership was measured using charismatic, transactional, visionary, transformational and culture-based leadership styles. Also human

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resource strategy was measured by development strategy, motivational strategy, reinforcement strategy and transfer strategy. The study however discovered that charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership styles are positively related to organizational performance. Yammarino *et al* (1993) studied the impact of transformational leadership on employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between the leadership style (transformational) and employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. In their study Koene *et al* (2002) examined the effect of different leadership styles on two financial measures of organizational performance and three measures of organizational climate in 50 super market stores of a large supermarket chain in the Netherlands. They discovered a clear relationship of local leadership with the financial performance and organizational climate in the stores. The findings also show that the leadership style have differential effect. Charismatic leadership and consideration have a substantial effect on climate and financial performance in the small store; suggesting the relevance of personal leadership of the store managers.

In his study on style and organizational performance of Nigerian companies, Okafor (2008) attempted to demonstrate the relationship between style and organizational performance. With the data from randomly quoted companies on the 1st their market of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), the study empirically established that using Ordinary Least Square, relationship between style and organizational performance is positive. Sandbakken (2004) examined the relationship between leadership practices and organizational performance in Norwegian context. Results from that study confirmed an overall positive relationship between transformational leadership practices and organizational performance.

However, in general, the effect of leadership style on organizational performance has been well studied, but the quality of performance measurement which is crucial to determining the outcomes has been a subject of discussion. Most of the studies when selecting measurement of performance focused only on financial performance or non-financial performance rather than both at the same time. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap observed in the previous studies and also extend the frontier of knowledge, this study focused on effect of leadership styles on organizational performance using financial performance, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction as a unit of measuring organizational performance.

LEADERSHIP THEORY

Review of the leadership literature shows an evolving series of school of thought from 'Great man' and 'Trait theories' to 'Transformational leadership theory'. Great man theory was based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities, and destined to lead. This theory was later expanded by some researchers by identifying the key characteristics/traits of successful leaders. Such traits include persistent, self confident, dependable, tolerant of stress, willing to assume responsibility, creativity, persuasive etc (Stogdill, 1974; Fielder, 1967). It was believed that these critical leadership traits could be isolated and that people with such traits could then be recruited, selected and installed into leadership positions. After several years of research, researchers discovered that no consistent traits could be identified and most of the traits studies were inconclusive. Also some of the traits were hard to measure (e.g honesty, loyalty, diligence or integrity). Therefore, new approach and theory in the field of leadership had to be found.

Behavioural school came up afterwards and focus on human relationships along with output and performance. One of the researchers in the Behavioural school of thought was McGregor (1960) who proposed theory X and Y. Theory X believes that average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if possible while theory Y believe that the expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest, and the average human being under proper conditions, learns not only to accept but to seek responsibility. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid is another form of Behavioural School of thought which believe that team management is a high concern for most employee and production and is the most effective type of leadership behaviour. As observed by researchers, behavioural theories may help managers develop certain leadership behaviours but give little guidance as to what constitute effective leadership in different situations. Instead, Contingency-Situational theories were developed to indicate that leadership styles to be used is contingent upon factors such as the situation, the people, the task, the organization and other environmental variables (Gosling *et al*, 2003). Fielder's Contingency model, The Hersey-Blanchard model of leadership, Adair's Action centred leadership model and Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum are some of the major theories contributed towards this school of thought. Transactional theory refined Contingency-Situational theory with much emphasis on the importance of the relationship between leader and followers; focusing on the mutual benefits derived from a form of agreement between the leader and the followers through which leader deliver such things as recognition, promotion or rewards in returns of loyalty, and commitment of the followers (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003).

Transformational theory proposed by Burns (1978) centres on broaden follower's views towards transcending self-interests for the good of the group, increasing awareness about the issues of consequence, and increasing the need for growth and self-actualization.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Wehrich (1992) classified leadership styles on the basis of how leaders use their authority. They gave three basic styles of leadership; autocratic, democratic or participative, and free-rein. The **autocratic leader** commands and expects compliance, is dogmatic and positive, and leads by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishment. The **democratic or participative leader** consults with subordinates on proposed actions and decisions and encourages participation from them. This type of leader ranges from the person who does not take action without subordinates' concurrence to the one who makes decision but consults with subordinates before doing so. The **free-rein leader** uses his or her power very little, if at all, giving subordinates a high degree of independence in their operations. Such leader depends largely on subordinates to set their own goals and the means of achieving them, and they see their role as one of aiding the operations of followers by furnishing them with information and acting primarily as a contact with the group's external environment.

Goleman (2004) describe six styles of leadership that have different effects on the emotions of the target followers. These are visionary leadership, the coaching leader, the affiliative leader, the democratic leader, the pace-setting leader; and the commanding leader. The **visionary leader** moves people towards a shared vision, telling them to go but not how to get there – thus motivating them to struggle forwards. They openly share information, hence giving knowledge power to others. This type is best when a new direction is needed in an organization. **Coaching leader** connects wants to organizational goals, holding long conversations that reach beyond the workplace, helping people find strengths and weaknesses and tying these to career aspirations and actions. They are good at delegating challenging assignments, demonstrating faith that demands justification and which leads to high levels of loyalty. It is used best when individuals need to build long-term capabilities. **Affiliative leader** creates people connections and thus harmony within the organization. It is a very collaborative style which focuses on emotional needs over work needs. When done badly, it avoids emotionally distressing situation such as negative feedback. Done well, it is often used alongside visionary leadership.

The **pace-setting leader** builds challenge and exciting goals for people, expecting excellence and often exemplifying it themselves. They identify poor performers and demand more of them. If necessary they will roll up their sleeves and rescue the situation themselves. The **commanding leader** soothes fears and gives directions by his or her powerful stance, commanding and expecting full compliance (agreement is not needed). They need emotional self-control for success and can seem cold and distant. This approach is best in times of crisis when you need unquestioned rapid action and with problem employees who do not respond to other methods. Conger and Kanungo (1998) describe five behavioural attributes of charismatic leaders that indicate a more transformational view point; vision and articulation; sensitivity to the environment; personal risk taking; sensitivity to member needs; and performing unconventional behaviour. Musser (1987) notes that charismatic leaders seek to instil both commitment to ideological goals and also devotion to themselves. The extent to which either of these two goals is dominant depends on the underlying motivations and needs of the leader.

Charismatic leaders gather followers through dint of personality and charm, rather than any form of external power or authority. They pay much attention to the person they are talking to at any one moment, making that person feel like they are, for that time, the most important person in the world. Charismatic leaders pay a great deal of attention in scanning and reading their environment, and are good at picking up the moods and concerns of both individuals and larger audiences. Also Likert (1967) identified four main styles of leadership; exploitative authoritative; benevolent authoritative; consultative authoritative; and consultative participative.

Bass (1985) developed two styles of leadership using Burns (1978) theoretical work as the basis. The two styles are transactional and transformational. He noted that transactional leadership style is founded on an exchange process in which the leader provides rewards in return for the subordinate's effort. In essence, leader-follower relationships are believed to be based on a series of transactions or bargains between leaders and followers. Transactional leadership are measured with two dimensions, contingent reward and management by exception. He explained further that transformational leadership style has been conceived to broaden followers view towards transcending self-interests for the good of the group, increasing awareness about the issues of consequence, and increasing the need for growth and self-actualization (Yammarino *et al*, 1998). Transformational leadership broaden the range of leadership beyond simply focusing on constructive

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or corrective transactions but transform or change the basic values, beliefs and attitudes of followers so that they can be willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization. This style is been measured by charisma, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based upon a survey of mid level managers of some service companies in Lagos metropolis. Lagos is the largest metropolitan area in Nigeria with over 9 million inhabitants. It the commercial nerves centre of Nigeria with airports, seaports, schools and several corporate organizations. Lagos is the most industrialized part of Nigeria with modern socio-economic facilities. The service companies surveyed in Lagos cut across Transport, Hotel, Insurance, Marketing and Airline. Random sampling technique was applied in the study. Two hundred copies of questionnaire were sent to the respondent's managers, 153 were returned of which 118 were found to be valid and analyzable representing 59% response rate.

The scale of measurement used for leadership style was adopted and modified from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Zhu (2002), Li (2002) and Wang *et al* (2010). The scale has 18 questions rated on five-point Likert scale (never-always). Six variables were finally extracted after the factor analysis. The variables are visionary, transactional, transformational, charismatic, democratic and autocratic leadership styles. The Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's value) for each of the variable are shown in the Table 1. In accordance with the above stated measuring scale, organizational performance scale adopts the design method of positive questions in which the respondents were asked about the performance of their companies in recent times especially in the area of profitability, customers and employees satisfaction. Factor analysis and reliability test give rise to three variables, which are financial performance; customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction with each of their coefficient displayed in Table 2. Regression analysis was used to measure the relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance. Leadership style is the independent variable and the organizational performance is the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In an attempt to study the effect of leadership style on organizational performance in the study area, various leadership styles and their effect on performance were examined. Based on factor analysis, six leadership styles were used, - visionary, transactional, transformational, charismatic, democratic and autocratic leadership styles. To measure organizational performance three variables of financial performance, customer satisfaction, and employees satisfaction were used. From table 3, democratic, transformational and charismatic leadership styles have a significant positive effect on the financial performance, this shows that these leadership styles will affect financial performance and appropriately determine whether the performance is good or not. Moreover, the results showed that visionary leadership ($\beta = 0.247$), charismatic leadership ($\beta = 0.422$), democratic leadership ($\beta = 0.628$), and transactional leadership ($\beta = 0.456$) have significant positive effect on employees satisfaction at various degrees. The implication of this is that when leader gives his followers opportunity to participate in decision making, reward them after a special job and give them sense of belonging, he will definitely gain their confidence and trust thereby leads to their satisfaction. This partially agreed with the findings of Wang *et al* (2010) when they discovered that transformational, visionary and charismatic leadership are positively related to organizational performance. Furthermore, the result indicates that visionary leadership ($\beta = 0.214$) and transactional leadership ($\beta = 0.375$) have significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. Charismatic and democratic leadership also have positive relationship with customer satisfaction but not significant. This is to say that a leader that has a vision and ready to integrate customers into that vision will always give customers the needed satisfaction, because they will have sense of belonging and loyalty to the company. Finally, the outcome of the analysis showed that democratic, charismatic, visionary and transformational leadership styles have a great effect on overall performance of an organization.

Table 1: The scale for the leadership style

Variable	Cronbach's value	Cummulative explained variance (%)	Factor loading	Item total correlation
Visionary leadership	0.684	63.40		
My supervisor always inspire me to think of the future			0.752	0.523
My supervisor is the standard for me to learn and intimate			0.750	0.452
My supervisor always share information related to a particular job with me			0.693	0.467
Democratic leadership	0.913	34.85		
My supervisor always consult me before making any decision			0.875	0.841
My supervisor makes me proud of being a member of the department			0.873	0.815
To work with my supervisor makes me feel good			0.783	0.722
Autocratic leadership	0.644	68.73		
My supervisor hands over instruction without any comment from me			-0.876	0.734
My supervisor uses threat and fear-based approach to achieve conformance			-0.803	0.712
Communication flow is entirely downward			-0.787	0.670
Charismatic leadership	0.854	49.29		
My supervisor will provide a new thinking approach for my difficult problem			0.917	0.576
My supervisor will tell me my job performance			0.845	0.778
My supervisor will help me build self-confidence, and the complete tasks to achieve departmental objectives			0.713	0.614
Transactional leadership	0.721	71.72		
I am aware that once the task is done, I can expect what reward will be			0.886	0.757
My supervisor don't interferes unless the problem get worse			0.769	0.675
Unless the target cannot be met, my supervisor doesn't take action			0.863	0.759
Transformational leadership	0.772	77.85		
My supervisor will provide a new approach to my difficult problem			0.897	0.823
My supervisor inspires me to rethink the key points of the past smooth operation			0.754	0.641
My supervisor will inspire me with new ways to think about old problems			0.712	0.643

Source: Data Analysis, 2010

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Table 2: The scale for the organizational performance

Factor	Cronbach's value	Cummulative explained variance	Factor loading	Item-total correlation
Financial performance	0.848	44.645		
The company's sales growth rate was higher than that of last year			0.918	0.821
The company's after-tax net income growth rate was higher than that of the last year			0.873	0.743
The company's return on investment was higher than that of last year			0.886	0.713
Employee satisfaction	0.758	57.245		
The company's employee productivity was higher than that of last year.			0.823	0.532
The company's employee morale is higher than that of last year.			0.742	0.502
The company's staff turnover was lower than that of last year.			0.711	0.497
Customer satisfaction	0.717	65.352		
The company's customer base is higher than the of last year			0.921	0.843
Company's customer always give a positive feedback			0.875	0.762
The company's new customers are higher than that of last year			0.717	0.435

Source: Data Analysis, 2010

Table 3: Regression analysis of the effect of leadership styles on organizational performance

Independent Variable		Dependent Variable Organizational Performance (Standardized β coefficient)		
Dimension		Financial performance	Employees satisfaction	Customer satisfaction
Leadership style	Visionary leadership	-0.342	0.247*	0.214**
	Transactional leadership	-0.154	0.456**	0.375*
	Transformational leadership	0.432*	0.231	-0.142
	Charismatic leadership	0.674***	0.422*	0.422
	Democratic leadership	0.743**	0.628***	0.525
	Autocratic leadership	-0.432	-0.328	0.132
Multiple R		0.652	0.532	0.684
R square		0.425	0.283	0.468
Adjusted R ²		0.362	0.216	0.371
F-value		6.874	5.327	3.486
p-value		0.000***	0.000***	0.000***

Source: Data Analysis, 2010

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This study has blaze the trail in combining both financial and non-financial measure in testing whether leadership style predicted organizational performance. The result of the study clearly substantiates the widely perceived relationship between leadership style and organizational performance and also reiterates the volatility of business environment which call for transformational, visionary, democratic and charismatic leadership. It is worth mentioning that the empirical analysis conducted in this research demonstrated that democratic and charismatic leadership styles directly and positively predicted organizational performance.

Also, the effect of transformational, visionary and transactional cannot be ignored, because leader who displayed more transformational attitudes, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration positively contributed to organizational performance (Elenkov *et al*, 2002). These styles of leadership are aimed at inspiring employees to find new ways that transform the organization, making it possible to realize future opportunities and be successful in a world of constant change (Sandbakken, 2006).

When the different leadership styles are examined separately on financial performance, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, additional findings arise. The finding supports a significant positive relationship between charismatic, transformational and democratic leadership, and financial performance. The idea is that, these leadership styles seem to make people more aware and responsible in their jobs. This awareness has effect on reducing the level of controllable costs and enhances the quality of work, resulting in a strong impact on net financial results of the organization (Koene *et al*, 2002). Furthermore, the study revealed that transactional, democratic and visionary leadership styles have significant effect on employee performance. The believe is that leaders with high levels of professionalism, vision and personal integrity can create an environment of creativity, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and excellence within the employees in the organization. The result further shows that virtually all the leadership styles have effect on customer satisfaction though at various levels. The understanding is that leaders motivate and inspire subordinates to give their best in order to meet the goals of the organization by satisfying the customers by providing best service to them. Generally, the results of the study indicate that democratic, charismatic, transformational and visionary leadership styles are very potent and significant in influencing organizational performance.

Finally, findings presented in this study could contribute to a useful framework for interpreting leadership styles in Nigerian context as well as help in raising awareness and further understanding of how different leadership styles can influence organizational performance. Also the results could provide more untapped opportunities to Nigerian business leaders and organizations as well as for leadership development and consulting practices. However, this study has produced suggestive results. It supports the effect of leadership style on organizational performance, therefore further research is strongly encouraged especially its replication in other organizational context and environment.

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