



PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF HEADMASTERS' DEMOCRATIC AND AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLES ON TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

OSINDELE Abosedo Oluwakemi, Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Kajo D.T., Dr. Mrs. Agbulu C.M.

Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State
Department of Educational Administration and Planning

Abstract: This study investigated the perceived influence of headmasters' democratic and autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State. A survey research design was employed, involving a population of 2,755 primary schools with 15,012 teachers and headmasters (SUBEB, 2018). Using Taro Yamane's formula (1967), a sample size of 390 was determined. A multistage sampling technique was utilized to ensure a representative sample from various zones, local government areas, and schools within Benue State. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire, "Headmasters' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire" (HLSTJPQ), developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was organized into two clusters to address the study's variables. Reliability was assessed through a pilot test conducted in Nasarawa State, where the instrument's internal consistency was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to address the research questions. Hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit test at a significance level of 0.05. The findings revealed that both democratic and autocratic leadership styles significantly influence teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State. Recommendations included that headmasters should actively involve teachers in decision-making processes and foster an inclusive environment to enhance teachers' job performance.

Keys: Headmaster's Democratic, Autocratic Leadership styles, Teachers Job Performance.

Background to the Study

Primary education in Nigeria serves as a crucial foundation for societal progress and individual development, marking the initial phase of formal education typically covering the first three grades. This stage introduces children to essential academic concepts and life skills, nurturing their cognitive, social, and emotional growth through a carefully designed curriculum that includes basic literacy, numeracy, and interactive, hands-on learning activities (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2017; Olatunji & Bakare, 2019). Teachers employ diverse methods to cater to various learning styles, fostering inclusivity and engagement (Okebukola, 2020). Additionally, children develop social competencies and values such as teamwork, respect, and responsibility, foundational for interpersonal skills (Ofoegbu, 2014; Ogunyinka, 2017). Extracurricular activities further help in identifying and

nurturing individual talents, boosting self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment (Uwaifo & Udu, 2016). Recognizing its pivotal role, improving the quality and accessibility of primary education in Nigeria is essential for fostering an educated, skilled, and prosperous society capable of overcoming socio-economic challenges and achieving sustainable development (Obanya, 2014; Adeola, 2018). This goal is achievable if the headmaster's leadership style promotes efficient and effective school administration (Ejimofor, 2017; Akinola, 2021).

Headmaster's leadership style refers to the approach and strategies used by the headmaster to guide, influence, and manage the school community, including making decisions, setting goals, motivating staff, handling conflicts, and fostering a positive school culture (Ejimofor, 2017; Abu & Makinde, 2019). Common leadership styles include autocratic (unilateral decision-making), democratic (collaborative decision-making), transformational (inspiring and motivating change), transactional (rewards and punishments-based management), and laissez-faire (minimal supervision and high autonomy for staff) (Bass & Avolio, 2023; Akomolafe, 2017). Effective headmasters often blend elements from different styles to meet the diverse needs of their school, which can have a significant impact on teachers' job performance (Ogunsola, 2019; Fiedler, 2019). Teachers' job performance refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which teachers fulfil their professional responsibilities and duties in the educational environment. This encompasses a variety of aspects, including their ability to deliver instructional content clearly and engagingly, manage classroom behavior, assess and evaluate student progress, provide constructive feedback, and foster a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere (Ofoegbu, 2014; Okon & Ali, 2020). High job performance also involves on-going professional development, collaboration with colleagues, effective communication with students and parents, and the ability to inspire and motivate students to achieve their academic potential (Adeyem i& Adeyinka, 2017; Akinola, 2021). This study will focus on the influence of headmasters' democratic and autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job performance in primary schools.

Democratic leadership style refers to a leadership approach where leaders actively involve team members in the decision-making process. This style is characterized by open communication, shared responsibility, and collective problem-solving (Ogunyinka, 2017; Ejimofor, 2017). Leaders encourage participation, value diverse perspectives, and foster a collaborative environment where members feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas and expertise (Obanya, 2014). The influence of headmasters' democratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State can be profound, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment that values teachers' input, boosts motivation and job satisfaction, and promotes professional development, collaboration, and innovative teaching strategies. This style ultimately leads to improved teacher performance, higher engagement, and better educational outcomes for students, unlike the autocratic leadership style (Abu, 2018; Fiedler, 2019)

Autocratic headmaster leadership style, characterized by a dictatorial approach, centralized decision-making, and a lack of input from teachers, can have a profoundly negative impact on teachers' job performance in primary schools (Akomolafe, 2017; Ogunsola, 2019). This style of leadership can lead to a work

environment that is stifling, demotivating, and unsupportive, resulting in low morale, job dissatisfaction, and a lack of enthusiasm among teachers (Adeola, 2018). With little room for creativity, innovation, or professional growth, teachers may feel undervalued, unappreciated, and disconnected from the school community (Uwaifo & Udu, 2016; Okebukola, 2020). Furthermore, the autocratic leadership style can lead to high levels of stress, burnout, and turnover, as teachers become frustrated with the lack of autonomy, input, and support, ultimately affecting the quality of education and student learning outcomes (Obanya, 2014). This is why some headmasters adopt a contingency leadership style that adapts to the needs of the situation, staff, and school environment (Abu, 2018; Ejimofor, 2017). Against this background, the researcher is investigating the perceived influence of headmasters' democratic and autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Primary education is the foundation for societal development and individual growth, and in Nigeria, it plays a critical role in shaping young learners' cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. Teachers' job performance is pivotal in achieving the goals of primary education, as it directly affects students' academic achievements and personal growth. However, the leadership style of the headmaster, as the key administrative figure in primary schools, has a significant impact on teachers' performance.

There are different leadership styles, such as autocratic and democratic, that influence how headmasters guide, motivate, and manage their staff. In Benue State, there is growing concern about the leadership styles adopted by headmasters and their effects on teachers' job satisfaction, motivation, and classroom performance. The democratic leadership style, characterized by shared decision-making, open communication, and valuing teachers' input, is believed to create a supportive and collaborative environment. In contrast, autocratic leadership, where decisions are made unilaterally with little to no input from teachers, can lead to low morale, frustration, and reduced job effectiveness.

The problem this study aims to address is the extent to which the headmaster's leadership style particularly democratic and autocratic styles influences teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State. There is limited empirical evidence on the specific impact these leadership styles have on teachers' motivation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and professional growth in this context. Understanding these dynamics is essential to improving the quality of education and fostering a more productive school environment.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the perceived influence of headmasters' democratic and autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of headmasters' democratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State.
2. Ascertain the influence of headmasters' autocratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the influence headmasters' democratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State?
2. How do headmasters' autocratic leadership style influence teachers' job performance in primary schools?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and will tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Headmasters' democratic leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State.
2. Headmasters' autocratic leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' job performance in primary schools.

Methodology

This study applied a survey research design to examine how leadership styles impact teachers' job performance in primary schools across Benue State. The survey method was chosen to enable data collection from a sample that represents the larger population, allowing generalization of findings. Citing Emaikwu (2015), the study notes that surveys provide quantitative data from diverse respondents, offering advantages like standardized responses and cost-effective data collection.

The target population included 15,012 teachers and headmasters from 2,755 primary schools in Benue State (SUBEB, 2018). Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 390 teachers and headmasters was selected through a multistage sampling approach, ensuring diverse representation across schools and local government areas. This sampling method accommodated practical constraints, making it feasible to gather data effectively from a smaller yet representative group.

Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled "Headmasters' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire" (HLSTJPQ), designed on a 4-point scale. The instrument's validity was reviewed by educational experts, while a pilot test confirmed reliability with an overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.88. Five research assistants with tertiary education qualifications were trained to assist with questionnaire distribution, enhancing the return rate and response accuracy through direct delivery.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were applied to answer the research questions. The study used the Chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit test to assess hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level, with results indicating the degree of leadership's influence on job performance. The collaborative use of research assistants and a direct distribution method streamlined data collection, making this survey design an efficient tool for understanding educational leadership in Benue State.

RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Research Question 1

The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation

Research Question One: What is the influence headmasters’ democratic leadership style on teachers’ job performance in primary schools in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Influence Headmasters’ Democratic Leadership Style on Teachers’ Job Performance

Item No	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Headmasters’ democratic leadership style encourages teachers to participate in decision-making.	43	105	146	75	369	2.31	0.93	Disagree
2	Teachers feel more motivated when headmasters adopt a democratic leadership approach	116	213	40	-	369	3.21	0.62	Agree
3	Headmasters' democratic leadership style promotes open communication with teachers.	101	203	65	-	369	3.21	0.62	Agree
4	Teachers perform better when involved in school decisions through a democratic leadership style.	116	213	40	-	369	3.10	0.65	Agree
5	Headmasters’ democratic leadership promotes a collaborative environment among teachers	101	203	65	-	369	3.21	0.62	Agree
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation							3.00	0.69	Agree

Source: Field Work 2024

Table 1 shows that respondents generally agree (mean = 3.00, SD = 0.69) that headmasters' democratic leadership style positively influences teachers' job performance in primary schools, with specific items indicating strong agreement on motivation, open communication, involvement in decisions, and collaboration.

Research Question Two: How do headmasters' autocratic leadership style influence teachers' job performance in primary schools?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents the Influence of Headmasters' Autocratic Leadership on Teachers' Job Performance

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6	Headmasters' autocratic leadership style limits teachers' involvement in decision-making	139	162	68	-	369	3.19	0.73	Agree
7	Headmasters' democratic leadership style promotes open communication with teachers.	2	123	173	71	369	2.03	0.86	Disagree
8	An autocratic approach by headmasters leads to lower job satisfaction among teachers.	75	7	196	91	369	2.15	0.73	Disagree
9	Teachers feel less motivated when headmasters employ an autocratic leadership style	109	92	72	17	369	2.18	1.03	Disagree
10	Teachers feel disconnected from school decisions due to autocratic leadership	172	180	17	-	369	3.42	0.58	Agree
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation							2.88	0.79	Agree

Source: Field Work 2024

Table 2 reveals that respondents generally agree (mean = 2.88, SD = 0.79) that headmasters' autocratic leadership style negatively impacts teachers' job performance in primary schools, particularly in limiting involvement in decision-making and causing feelings of disconnection from school decisions, although specific items indicate disagreement regarding motivation and job satisfaction.

Chi-square was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Hypothesis One: Influence Headmasters' Democratic Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Performance in Primary Schools

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of influence Headmasters' Democratic Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Performance in Primary Schools.

Response Options	Fo	Fe	a	df	x ^{2-cal}	Asymp. Sig.	Remark
Strongly Agree	-	-					
Agree	40	123					
Disagree	213	123	0.05	3	122.260a	0.000 S,	Reject H0
Strongly Disagree	116	123					
Total (N)	369						

The chi-square value is 122.260 with a p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀). This result indicates a significant influence of headmasters' democratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State.

Hypothesis Two: Headmasters' autocratic leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' job performance in primary schools.

Table 4: Chi-square Test on Influence Headmasters' autocratic Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Performance in Primary Schools in Benue State.

Response Options	Fo	Fe	a	df	x ^{2-cal}	Asymp. Sig.	Remark
Strongly Agree	91	92.3					
Agree	196	92.3					
Disagree	7	92.3	0.05	3	198.707a	0.000	Reject H ₀
Strongly Disagree	75	92.3					
Total (N)	369						

The chi-square value is 198.707 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀),

indicating a significant influence of headmasters' autocratic leadership style on teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, two null hypotheses were formulated and tested to understand the impact of various leadership styles on teachers' job performance. The findings are discussed below:

The study's first finding reveals that headmasters' democratic leadership style significantly enhances teachers' job performance in primary schools. This aligns with research by Akperan (2020), who identified democratic leadership as a key predictor of teachers' effectiveness, as teachers perform better when included in decision-making and feel valued in their roles. Okoro (2022) also found that democratic leadership positively impacts performance by fostering a supportive, empowering environment that boosts teachers' morale, engagement, and job satisfaction. This collaborative approach enables teachers to take ownership of their work and commit more fully to student success, creating a productive school culture that benefits both educators and learners.

In contrast, the second finding shows that an autocratic leadership style tends to negatively impact teachers' job performance, reinforcing findings by Ademola (2019) and Muhammad (2021). Ademola observed that autocratic leadership's restrictive nature limits teachers' autonomy, stifling their creativity and leading to dissatisfaction and reduced productivity. Muhammad's study further highlighted that schools with autocratic headmasters experience significantly lower teacher engagement and higher burnout rates compared to those with democratic leadership, as autocratic methods rely on top-down directives without teacher input. The restrictive atmosphere of autocratic leadership can result in high turnover rates and diminished educational outcomes, suggesting that a more democratic approach may be better suited to fostering a positive teaching environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that democratic and autocratic leadership styles influence teachers' job performance in primary schools in Benue State, indicating that effective leadership is crucial for enhancing educational outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been proposed to enhance teachers' job performance in primary schools:

1. **Involve Teachers in Decision-Making:** Headmasters should actively involve teachers in decision-making processes. This participation not only empowers teachers but also fosters a sense of ownership and accountability regarding their roles within the school. When teachers are included in discussions about policies, curriculum changes, and other significant decisions, they are more likely to feel valued and respected, which can lead to increased motivation and engagement in their work. Additionally, creating an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed can strengthen teamwork and collaboration among staff. By prioritizing teacher involvement in decision-making, headmasters can

significantly enhance job performance, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for students.

2. **Avoid Autocratic Leadership Practices:** Headmasters should avoid autocratic leadership practices that restrict teacher participation and limit their professional autonomy. Autocratic leadership often creates a top-down management style where decisions are made without input from teachers, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement and frustration among staff. Instead, headmasters should adopt more participative and supportive leadership approaches, such as transformational or democratic styles, which encourage collaboration and inclusivity. By fostering a supportive atmosphere where teachers feel empowered to contribute, headmasters can improve job performance and overall staff morale. Additionally, implementing professional development programs that promote leadership skills among teachers can further enhance their sense of agency and capability within the school. By embracing a more collaborative approach to leadership, headmasters can cultivate a positive school culture that not only boosts teachers' job performance but also ultimately benefits students' learning experiences.

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