

Effects of Leadership Styles on Productivity of Public Service Secretaries

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ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a vital role in providing direction and purpose towards achieving the goals of any organization. Leadership style is a corporate task of the top management whose decisions determines the extent to which employees gain satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work. As such, it is the chief element that differentiates a successful organization from an unsuccessful one; hence, this study is on the effect of leadership styles on the productivity of secretaries in public institutions. Anchored on dyadic relationship theory, the paper reviews the relationship between a leader and an individual pointing out that the motivation and the capability of an individual to a goal is dependent on the influence of the leader. The study adopted quantitative approach and survey as a research design. This enabled the researcher to take primary data from large number of respondents. Findings revealed that leadership is not confined to a particular style; rather it is exercised in line with distinctive organizational circumstances. Furthermore, many secretaries are aware of the competences needed to perform their role and they tend to agree with certain kind of leadership styles as this brings out the best in an employee.

Keywords: Leadership, Secretary, Public, Productivity, Effect, Styles

INTRODUCTION

The idea of leadership and style differs from one person or situation to the other. The word "leadership" has been used in different areas of human endeavour such as politics, businesses, academics, social works, etc. Earlier perceptions about leadership showed it as personal ability. In the view of [1], the degree to which the individual exhibits leadership traits depends not only on his characteristics and personal abilities, but also on the characteristics of the situation and environment in which he finds himself. In view of the fact that human beings could become members of an organisation in order to achieve certain personal objectives, the degree to which they are actively involved depends on how much conviction they have that their membership will enable them achieve their predetermined goals. Hence, a person will support an organisation if he believes that through it his personal

objectives and goals could be met if not, the person's interest will decline. Leadership style in any corporation is one of the factors that play major role in boosting or slowing down the interest and commitment of the individuals in a firm. The business world has been preoccupied with leadership, and with identification of the personalities required for effective leadership. [2] [3] observes that in recent times, the area of leadership has been studied more extensively than almost any other aspect of human behaviour. Leadership has been defined in several ways by different authors focusing on traits, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationship and as an occupation of an administrative position [4]. Similarly, [5] defines leadership as "a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal". According to [6] [7], this definition is based on the

postulation that leadership entails deliberately influencing people working in diverse capacities in a group or organisations. In the same vein, [8] [9] put forward that leadership happens only when people are swayed to do things that are ethical and beneficial to the firm. Secretaries are among the categories of workers that come under such direct and indirect influence of leaders [10]. According to [11], a secretary is an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment, and makes decision with the scope of assigned authority. [12] goes on to define a secretary as one who is supposed to aid the progress of communication between a section or department and the rest of the organization, clients, customers, and suppliers through the use of both written and verbal forms of communication. In his opinion, [13] [14] state that in addition to typing dictated letters, experienced secretaries provide information, compose routine statements, and make feasible arrangement for solution of problems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the dyadic leadership theory. This theory mirrors the relationship between a leader and an individual pointing out that the motivation and the capability of an individual to a goal is dependent on the influence of the leader [19]. Furthermore, [20], makes clear that the behavior of leader is the major factor that changes a subordinate's behavior, attitudes and motivation.

The significance of leadership style in every aspect of life cannot be overlooked. Leadership is the chief element that differentiates a successful organization from an unsuccessful one; a good administration from a bad one, a thriving business from a failed business, amongst others. Leadership plays a vital role in providing direction and purpose towards achieving goals of the organization.

[15] summarises by saying that contemporary secretaries are expected to be multi-task and multi-skilled, have important problem-solving skill and are the first to know what is going on in the organization. [16] [17] explain that the duties of a secretary are company-specific and person-specific and could be dependent on the nature of relationship between the secretary and the line manager. [18] further posits that secretaries are expected to provide diverse responses to suit the diverse routines of their bosses. This affirms the position earlier highlighted that secretaries are influenced by their line managers and that the leadership styles adopted by the line managers may have an impact on their productivity.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To ascertain the types of leadership style obtainable in public sectors
- ii. To examine the types of competencies expected of secretaries
- iii. To find out the effects of a leadership style on the secretary's productivity

Research indicates that there are a number of leadership styles adopted by managers to enable them offer proper guidance to subordinates with a view to achieving organizational goals [21]. However, it is believed that these are applied independently depending on the existing circumstance(s) within a business locale; thus, some administrators adopt and misapply leadership styles which results in the secretary's doing more difficult work in terms of acting as a bridge between the manager and clients or visitors. This study therefore intends to examine the effects of leadership styles on the productivities of public service secretaries. The aim of this paper is to explore the functions of secretaries in public sectors and to examine their competences with respect to leadership styles of their superiors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to [22], because businesses are expected to communicate with its stakeholders, they usually require a concept called organisational communication. Organisational communication entails a situation where a person is expected to design and exchange messages in order to deal with environmental uncertainties. Usually, the one at the centre of this work is the secretary. According to [23], a secretary is an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills and has the capability to take responsibility with no or less supervision, ability to make decision regarding the assigned duties, and being familiar with the work schedule of the boss as well as the boss's extracurricular activities. The ability of a secretary to perform this important function very well, may be dependent on the type of the leadership style of the superior. This is due to the fact that leadership style plays a key role in boosting or slowing down the interest and dedication of the individuals in the organization [24].

Types of leadership styles

Leadership style is the manner in which leaders interact or behave towards members of their team. They are various styles of leadership which have been recognized by scholars. These include;

Democratic Leadership

This type of leadership is in form of persuasion of people in certain ways in accordance with and/or favourable to basic democratic principles and processes, like self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation [25]. Conversely, [26] defined democratic leadership as a leadership style with more emphasis on people and performance in order to achieve organizational and personal goals. It does this by pushing for a well-organized work environment, clear responsibilities and goals to get jobs done through incentives and management of individuals and groups to use their full potentials. This style of leadership equally recognizes a person's self-actualization and self-

esteem through a highly encouraging and motivation orientated environment. It puts into practice members' involvement in considering essential issues and exercises influence in reaching consensual decisions [27]. Thus, this form of leadership recognizes members' opinions and involvement in decision-making.

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic style of leadership according to [28], places high emphasis on performance and low emphasis on people for getting jobs done or achieving objectives through the use of authority, control, manipulation, and hard work. It presupposes that people are untrustworthy, lazy, and irresponsible, and that, members should not or have minimal involvement in decision-making, planning, organizing, and control. [29] also puts forward that autocratic style of leadership is designed in hierarchical chain-of command environment with well-established and controlled corrective measures, which center on punishment for nonconformity. According to him, autocratic leader takes final decisions alone and imposes on the members, and believes that members have fewer capabilities and that, they need to be supervised and directed closely. It can be deduced from these explanations that autocratic leadership style has minimal recognition for members' involvement in decision-making.

Laissez-faire Leadership

According to [30], the laissez-faire style of leadership is one in which there is a strong belief that members or employees knows best, how to perform their jobs, hence they do not need direct supervision. This suggests that there is a freedom of choice for employees to do as they choose. He further explains that provision of information and resources is minimal with this style of leadership, and there is absolutely no participation, involvement, or communication within workforce, and also, employees' agreements and commitments towards goals and objectives are just assumed. On

his part, [31] opines that, laissezfaire style of leadership does not give much recognition to employees and performance based on the assumption that humans are unpredictable and uncontrollable. Consequently, a leader should do as much as possible to stay away from troubles and keep a low profile by leaving the people or giving the people the freedom to do whatever they want. [32] described the laissez-faire leadership style as "nonleadership", because this type of leadership abdicates decision-making and avoids taking action.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leader according to [33] is the type of leader that supports the members' level of maturity and concerns for achievements beyond instant self-interest and self-actualization through idealized persuasion, logical inspiration or individual consideration and the well-being of others, the organization, and the society. On the other hand, [34], portray transformational leadership as a "process" in which leaders try to develop their followers by increasing the awareness of their followers about what is essential and right, and to elevate the maturity level of their followers by developing their potentials to a level that exceeds a simple exchange of reward for efforts. In essence, [35] view transformational leadership as leaders who seek to increase the developmental level of members towards achievements and benefits for individuals, the organization, and the society. The effort of developing followers makes transformational leaders proactive and fast thinkers.

Transactional Leadership

In the opinion of [3], transactional leadership involves the exchange connection that exists between the leader and the followers in meeting their own self-interest. He buttressed this by saying that transactional leader establishes a contingent reward in exchange of the efforts of the followers either through directing or by participating on what needs to be done by the followers. In connection to this behaviour as observed by [8] is management-by-exception. This

is where performance of followers is supervised by leaders and disciplinary actions are taken for non-performance. It could also be in the form of passive leadership where leaders wait until problems occur before disciplinary measures are taken, or leaders would rather prefer not to take any action as characterized by laissez-faire leadership. However, [5], based on a prior research on leadership style for men and women, confirmed transactional leadership as managing in such a way that clarifies subordinates' responsibilities and rewarding them for achievement of standards, as well as taking corrective actions for failure to meet objectives.

Competencies of Secretaries

[23], define competency as capability or efficiency in undertaking assigned functions and duties. [34] is of the opinion that competency has the following components - knowledge and skills, (attitudes and beliefs), verbal, numerical and spatial aptitudes, thinking and leadership abilities, general, professional and organizational knowledge. [3] identified the following competencies of secretaries needed for effective performance - secretarial competencies, office technology management competencies, communication competencies, management competencies, personality competencies and human relation competencies.

Secretarial competencies

[3] explain that secretarial competencies encompass speed and accuracy in using the keyboard, ability to produce documents with efficient display and format, capacity to proofread and edit documents, file and quickly retrieve documents from the file, keep track of files, handle mails, draft routine letters, arrange meetings and produce appropriate minutes.

Office technology competencies -

Office technology covers all electronic equipment and amenities that facilitate the procedures used to process office information. Hence, secretaries are required to have the ability to connect

hardware components, boot and shut down computer, efficiently use input devices, connect and use printer and relevant equipment for duplication, use secondary storage devices, use the internet for data gathering and e-mailing, prevent viral infection of information hard ware's and use software such as word processor, spread sheet and data-base management [11].

Communication competencies

In the words of [4], communication in business organizations is important to enable such organization achieve the stated objectives. Nonetheless, communication needs to be effective by way of ensuring that the intended message is received, correctly interpreted and understood, accepted and appropriately acted upon by the receiver and confirmed by feedback. For this to happen, secretaries need to have the following competencies - the ability to understand the official language, use oral communication efficiently, effectively use written communication, spell words correctly in written communication, pronounce words correctly and clearly in oral communication, use appropriate gestures to communicate, communicate with facial expressions, communicate orally with adequate tone and write legibly and logically in written communication.

Management competencies

According to [34], a manager needs to possess special abilities to succeed. Therefore management is needed in all human endeavours and by extension, all workers including secretaries in organizations need to practice good management to succeed. To do this, secretaries need the following competencies - ability to safeguard office documents from loss or willful destruction, adequately maintain work equipment and facilities, manage the work environment by properly arranging and maintaining furniture and equipment, procure relevant office stationery and supplies, properly use office hours, maintain confidentiality of office records, organize personal efforts and energy as

well as those of subordinates and persistently seek solutions to problems.

Personality competencies

Personality is regarded as the physical, mental and emotional characteristics of an individual that are presented to other people. It is developed from childhood but goes through gradual changes while a person is growing up. Job satisfaction and self-fulfillment of a person are closely associated with personality. Secretaries need the following competencies to enable them relate well with people at work - ability to always maintain cheerful disposition, demonstrate team spirit, speak and deal truthfully at all times, tolerate other people, innovate workable ideas and processes, use initiative, retain self-control always, respect superiors and equals, persistently work even when extra time is needed and being polite constantly.

Human relations competencies

Human relations refer to the communication that occurs among people in an environment. [34] believes that human relations entail dealing with people in a way that facilitate achievement of collective goals. It is about interaction at the workplace aimed at understanding fellow workers and clients to achieve organizational goal. Secretaries need human relations competencies to answer calls, treat mails, attend to visitors, relate with the public, superiors, subordinates and colleagues in general. These competencies includes - ability to understand and treat other people as important members of the organization, be a member of a team, protect the interest of the supervisor, show respect to the supervisor, ability to be open, sociable and selfless, ability to listen and hear other people's opinion, etc.

Functions/Roles of Secretaries

[21], identified the following functions of secretaries in an organization:

Data generation - Secretaries carry out the function of generating or collecting data by flipping through pages of files stored in the office or clicking open the documents stored inside the computer.

They may also source for data or information from other establishments or institutions through surfing the internet.

Data processing and interpretation

Information simply means processed data. According to [7], processed data could only be information when the data is properly analysed and interpreted to serve a useful purpose. Secretaries usually carry out analysis and interpretation of data using statistical tools, simple mathematical tools, and sometimes, common sense.

Information and office management - In his opinion, [26], explains that the secretary's information management functions ranges from creation of all types of documents, distribution of the documents, storing and retrieval of stored documents as well as making changes in the existing documents when new information becomes available. [32] adds that, filing plays a key role in executing this function because it aids the collection of information for reference purposes and preservation. For efficiency therefore, filing should meet the following conditions - simplicity, security, compactness and comprehensiveness, clear cross-referencing, space, economy, accessibility and adaptability.

Treating correspondence - [39] defined correspondence as letters received or sent out of an office. Secretaries perform the function of reproducing manuscripts that originate from their supervisors as outgoing mails from the office and receive and treat in-coming mails according to a prescribed procedure. In performing this function, secretaries are supposed to be creative, innovative and discreet.

Organizing and clerking meetings - According to [11] the purpose of a meeting may include sharing of ideas, expressing of views on topics, raising or offering suggestions or solutions to problems. [32] further adds that meetings are major part of communications in an organization and that all secretaries are supposed to be familiar with the necessary procedure for a successful meeting. The procedures include preparing and serving notice and agenda,

collecting and assembling relevant information to facilitate discussions or solution of problems, clerking meetings, producing the minutes and distributing them to all the people entitled to have copies.

Handling telecommunication and postal services - Secretaries ought to be familiar with the services offered by telecommunication and postal services companies and their respective charges, to enable them perform related functions promptly and efficiently.

Effects of a Leadership Styles on the Secretary's productivity

Autocratic Leadership - this style of leadership assumes that people are lazy, irresponsible, and untrustworthy and that planning, organizing, controlling, and decision making should be accomplished by the leader with minimal involvement from employees [40]. Thus, the effect of such leadership style on people is that, they become bitter and aggressive, and this result in distortion in communications, high turnover and absenteeism, and low productivity and poor work quality. It also puts employees under a lot of rules, procedures, red tape, status symbols, and working according to the dictates of the boss. This makes the employees dependent, less creative and afraid to seek responsibility [45].

Laissez Faire Leader - This type of leadership gives little recognition to performance and assume that people are unpredictable and uncontrollable and that a leader needs to keep a low profile and leave people alone as much as possible [11]. Hence, employees who are under this style of leadership are said to be indifferent, disinterested, and are resentful of the organization and their leaders [31].

Transformational Leader - [12], defines transformational leadership as a process that involve both leaders and followers supporting one another to attain a higher level of morality and motivation. Leaders who adopt this style have strong moral values and goals which translate into behaviours and decisions that promote ethical policies, procedures, and

processes within their organizations [7]. [7] propose that these leaders also help followers improve their sense of understanding of their own moral perspective and that of others. In addition, followers are influenced in selecting information based on moral relevance from available sources. Furthermore, this style causes followers to learn how to think about their own roles, how to make their own decisions, and how to behave in accordance with their moral identity by observing leaders' morally communicating, modeling, rewarding moral actions, and engaging in moral behaviours [18].

Democratic Leader - [23], explains that this style places more emphasis on both the performance and the welfare of the employees. Hence this style leads to high employee productivity, satisfaction, cooperation, and commitment, and that they are not subjected to rigorous controls and formal rules and procedures. Under this style, employees are

competent and are willing to give their best, take initiative through critical thinking, communicate openly, and seek and embrace responsibilities [12].

Transactional Leader - These leaders use rational or economic means to monitor and control employees [33]. It is based on the principle of exchange where leaders offer tangible or intangible support and resources to followers and in return, followers give in their best in terms of efforts and performance [33]. Leaders who use this style monitor employees' digression from standards, mistakes, and errors, take action when necessary leading to moral development of employees [33]. Nonetheless, [33] maintain that employees led with this style of leaders act in an unethical way when put under stress. In addition, employees act unethically when faced with potential punishments, such as demotion, non-payment of salary and embarrassment [21].

RESEARCH METHODS

Design

This study adopted the survey method and incorporated random sampling technique. The study population is made up of 150 employees at the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. In selecting these respondents, the purposive sampling method was used because the study focused on a specific category (secretaries) of persons in the institution. Of the 150 persons selected, 135 out of 150 responded. The questionnaire contained only closed-

ended questions which were mainly likert type of questions.

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed quantitatively using frequency tables and percentages while the results were presented and analyzed using the four-point Likert Scale together with percentages and weighted mean. The benchmark for weighted mean is 3.00. However, each research question has a grand mean of responses from the respondents which determines acceptance or rejection.

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Items	Frequency	Percent
21 - 30	105	77.7 %
31 - 40	19	14.07 %
41 - and above	11	8.1%
Total	135	99.9%

Table 1 show that 105 of the respondents constituting 77.7% are within the age bracket of 21-30, while 19 respondents, representing 14.07 % are within the age limit of 31 - 40; however, 11 respondents

within the age bracket of 41 and above constitute 8.1%. From the table, majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 21 to 30.

Table 2: Gender

Items	Frequency	Percent
Male	63	46.7%
Female	72	53.3 %
Total	135	100%

In Table 2, the majority of the respondents constituting 53.3% are females, while 46.7% of the respondents are males.

Table 3: Educational qualification of respondents

Items	Frequency	Percent
O'Level	3	2.2%
HND	54	40%
Degree	69	51.1%
Masters	9	6.7%
Total	135	100%

Table 3 analysis shows that 40% of the respondents have Higher National Diplomas, 9 respondents constituting

6.7% have Masters Certificate, while 2.2% O'Levels. Majority (51.1%) of the respondents have degrees.

Table 4: Types of Leadership Style

S/N	Item	4 SA	3 A	2 SD	1 D	Total	Mean
4	Workers welfare and their performance, good working environment, and employee involvement are important to your leader	85(63.7%)	15(11.1%)	12(8.8%)	23(17%)	135	3.2
5	Your boss frequently expects your output to match your Salary	62(45.9%)	26(19.3%)	31(23%)	16(11.8%)	135	3.0
6	Your boss does not involve you in decision making but rather control, manipulate, and authorize to get jobs done	48(35.6%)	24(17.8%)	43(31.8%)	20(14.8%)	135	2.7
7	Your boss provides you with necessary resources, information and training to enable you develop your potential to make you mature for a leadership position	85(63%)	17(13%)	13(9.6%)	20(14.8%)	135	3.2
8	Your boss provides you with information and resources but gives you the freedom to make your own decisions to perform your duties with no control or supervision	61(45.2%)	28(20.7%)	27(20%)	19(14.1%)	135	3.2

Total number of respondents = 135. Grand Mean = 3.8

Note: Values in bracket () are in percentages

Table 5: - Competences of Secretaries

S/N	Item	4 SA	3 A	2 SD	1 D	Total	Mean
9	You are very good at using the keyboard to produce documents and letters, file and quickly retrieve, handle correspondence, organize meetings and produce suitable minutes	79(59%)	30(22.2%)	9(6.6%)	17(12.6%)	135	3.3
10	You read, understand, write and speak English fluently, and use suitable gestures and facial expressions to communicate effectively	84(62.2%)	25(18.5%)	12(8.8%)	14(10.4%)	135	3.3
11	A secretary must be a team player and treat other people as important members of the organization, respect and protect the interest of the supervisor at all times	92(68.1%)	13(9.6%)	22(16.3%)	8(5.9%)	135	3.4
12	A secretary must protect office documents from loss or destruction, properly arrange and maintain furniture, equipment and other facilities	88(65.2%)	24(17.8%)	18(13.3%)	5(3.7%)	135	3.4

Total number of respondents = 135. Grand Mean = 3.4

Table 6: Functions of Secretaries

S/N	Item	4 SA	3 A	2 SD	1 D	Total	Mean
12	A secretary is supposed to create all types of documents, disseminate documents, store and retrieve stored documents and make changes in the existing documents.	91(67.4%)	19(14.1%)	8(5.9%)	17(12.6%)	135	3.4
13	A secretary is supposed to be familiar with the procedure for a successful meeting, produce and distribute minutes to all the people entitled to have copies	84(62.2%)	22(16.3%)	20(14.8%)	9(6.7%)	135	3.3
14	A secretary is supposed to reproduce manuscripts that originate from supervisor's outgoing mails from the office and receive and treat in-coming mails according to a prescribed procedure	98(72.6%)	13(9.6%)	8(5.9%)	16(11.9%)	135	3.4
15	A secretary is supposed to analyse and interpret data using statistical tools, simple mathematical tools and common sense	83(61.5%)	24(17.8%)	16(11.9%)	12(8.8%)	135	3.3

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Observation in table 4 implies that, around 78% of the respondents agreed that their bosses use democratic style because workers are allowed to be part of the decision making and their welfare is paramount to their bosses. 52% of the respondents indicated that their bosses displayed autocratic behaviours, yet, 45% quite disagree. This means that the

respondents were not in total agreement on whether their bosses use autocratic style or not. Also, it was unexpected to find that 65% of the respondents had laissez-faire leaders as bosses. This is a good reason for another study in order to find out if these bosses are males or females. About 76% accepted that their leaders use transformational approach

and interestingly, over 80% of the respondents indicated that their leaders apply transactional leadership style. The responses show that leaders of various organizations tend to adopt the style of leadership that suits the present context within which an organization operates especially with regards to democratic, transformational and transactional leaderships. In addition, responses in table 5 indicates that respondents agree to a great extent (81%) that secretaries or are supposed to possess secretarial, office technology, communication, management, and personality competencies. This was not unexpected because majority (51.1%) of the respondents possessed degrees. Hence, the respondents understand what

is expected of them as secretaries. It is of the essence that this awareness of competencies should as a matter of fact reflect in the performance of their duties. Furthermore, Findings in table 6 point to the fact that almost all the respondents (81%, 78%, 81%, and 78%) supported the fact that secretaries are supposed to generate and collect data from relevant sources, process and interpret data using appropriate instruments, manage information and office facilities, treat correspondence according to the prescribed procedures, and be abreast with the necessary procedures of organizing. This response is supported by the Grand Mean = 3.3.

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to ascertain the effect of leadership styles on secretaries in public sectors. Accordingly, the study concluded that the impact of democratic style of leadership on secretaries is one of active participation in the management of an organization; also the welfare of workers is often given major consideration as revealed by the respondents. Similarly, transformational leadership style proved to have a major effect on the morality of the employees because the roles and decisions they make are guided by the moral identity exhibited by their leaders or bosses. Nonetheless, the responses on the effect

of autocratic leadership style on secretaries indicated that contrary to expectations that it leads to low productivity, absenteeism, and distortion of communication, nearly half of the respondents (45%) disagreed. In the same vein, 65% of the respondents noted that they had laissez-faire leaders, and this makes them unconcerned and disinterested but not resentful (83%) to their bosses. Moreover, most secretaries in the public sector are against transactional leadership style especially because the type of the reward received is dependent on what you offer. Hence, most employees tend to resent such leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings, the following recommendations will suffice:

- i. Leadership style is a way in which leaders interact or behave towards members of their team; hence leaders must ensure that the welfare of their subordinates is made paramount.
- ii. Leaders as a matter of necessity should see to it that their subordinates are actively involved in the affairs of management. This puts the employees (secretaries) in

a better frame of mind when they feel as part of an organization, and it makes them put in their best at work, leading to more productivity.

- iii. As a leader, it is imperative to always seek to increase the developmental level of employees (secretaries). This result in major achievements and benefits for the individuals, the organization, and the society.

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