

Leadership and Teachers' Morale in Senior Secondary Schools in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' morale in senior secondary schools in Plateau State. The correlation research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of 39 principals and 229 teachers who have spent at least three years working together in the Senior Secondary Schools of Barkin Ladi and Langtang North Local Government areas in Plateau State. The sample consists of 31 principals and 137 teachers out of the population. The instruments used for data collection were the Principal Leadership Style Questionnaire (PLSQ) and Teachers' Questionnaire (TQ). Data were analyzed using the frequency count, percentage, and Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient (Pearson r). Findings were; there was positive statistical significant relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and teachers' morale; there was negative statistical significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and teachers' morale; while there was no statistical significant relationship between the laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' morale. In addition, principals were found to dominantly practice the democratic leadership style and teachers' morale was confirmed to be moderate in the Senior Secondary Schools. Base on the findings recommendations were made some of which are; Principals should be sent for in-service-training to study leadership in school; to

organize workshops, seminars and conferences for principals of secondary schools on leadership styles; and to create awareness on the importance of teacher morale in school effectiveness.

1. Introduction

School leadership is an essential aspect in school administration because of its influencing role to the achievement of school goals. The structural relationships in schools are influenced by the leadership behaviors which might have some possible effects on both job characteristics and individuals' response in the work place that can influence members' behaviors.

With respect to secondary school education in Nigeria, there seems to be challenges for principals' leadership roles which have attracted an increased attention due to the myriad of problems bedeviling the system. Principals are blamed for negligence of duty, authoritative approaches, and exhibit of careless attitudes in their leadership process (Udoh, 2002). In the same vein, Tella, Ayeni and Popoola (2007) observed that high proportions of principals in the secondary schools in Nigeria are highhanded and autocratic in their dealing with teachers. Lamenting on behaviors of principals in schools, Alex (2008) observed that most often principals are hardly found in schools to attend to their teachers. On daily basis, the principals seem too

busy that they hardly monitor and supervise teachers in their daily affairs.

Some of the major leadership styles practiced in social organizations (including schools) are the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. The autocratic leader is task-oriented, democratic is relationship-oriented and laissez-faire is free-rein-oriented (Edem, 2006). Researches confirmed that the democratic leadership style was the most commonly used among principals of Senior Secondary Schools (Alsaigh & Hussain, 2007; Adeyemi, 2010). Achor (2009) maintained that members working with a democratic leader often experience friendly atmosphere, cooperation and willingness to effective performance. In addition, empirical study by Romania (2010) confirmed a positive, moderately strong and significant relationship between leadership dimensions and overall teachers' morale in a developed nation. Randolph-Robinson (2007) confirmed that teacher morale can be predicted on the basis of the leadership style asserted by the principal. William (2006) found a significant relationship between democratic leadership style and teachers job satisfaction. However, this might not be quite applicable in a developing nation Nigeria due to the different environments of the schools.

Morale is seen as an essential ingredient to effective job commitment in a work place. It is the psychological state of mind, which determines the attitude of an individual or a group of individuals to themselves, colleagues and the work environment (Merriam-Webster's collegiate Dictionary). Such attitudes determine in turn the willingness to cooperate effectively in the attainment of the objectives of the school. High morale is associated with happiness and job satisfaction with high productivity, while low morale with aggrieved situation and dissatisfaction of the teacher, could reflect to low performance (Houchard, 2005; Egley & Jones, 2005). Additional evidences seem to show that teachers often lose hope and interest in the teaching profession. Probably, that is why most teachers are found neglecting their duties for some menial jobs in order to earn a living. This is reflected by persistent lateness to work,

absenteeism, charting in groups during classes hours, taking flimsy excuses to be away from school, and conflict situations that signify unhappiness in the work place (Waila, 2001). However, it seems most principals do not appreciate the fact that motivating teachers to boost their morale is an aspect of facilitating teacher commitment to work.

Leadership in school may impact affection and feelings that teachers can have about their jobs. Researches revealed that lack of effective leadership skills negatively affected teachers' job satisfaction and un-conducive environment created by leadership flaws affected teachers' feelings about their jobs (Ejimofor, 2007; Bradley, 2010). Probably, it can result from the fact that some leaders are autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire with different behavioral characteristics for influencing teachers. Perhaps, some principals are insensitive to teachers' views with poor relationships where the school atmosphere becomes unfriendly and uncooperative for work.

Under such conditions, it is likely that conflicts can occur between the leader and the subordinates that can lower morale in a scene of confusion and chaos resulting to low productivity. It is against this background, that this study will investigate the relationship between the principals' leadership styles and teachers' morale in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' morale in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State. Specifically, the study is meant to achieve the following objectives:

- Determine the type of leadership styles practiced by principals in senior secondary schools in Plateau State.
- Determine the morale level of teachers in senior secondary schools in Plateau State.

- Determine the relationship between teachers' perception of principals' leadership styles and teachers' morale in senior secondary schools in Plateau State.

3. Research Questions

The following questions have been raised to guide the study.

- What is the leadership style used by principals in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State?
- What is the morale level of teachers in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State?

4. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership styles as perceived by teachers and teachers' morale in the senior secondary schools in Plateau State.

5. Significance of the Study

Leadership in school has far-reaching benefits to the goals desire of the school system. It is hoped that the findings from this study will greatly provide useful information on principals' leadership styles and teachers' morale. These might be beneficial to the secondary school personnel (principals and teachers), Ministry of Education officials (inspectors, administrators, and curriculum planners), researchers, and authors. They may see the need for adjustment and flexibility in school leadership as a source of improving teacher morale for school effectiveness. Furthermore, it may help to influence the degree in which leaders in schools can predict and determine what the outcome of their actions and decisions can become in leadership to provide the most unambiguous qualities in leadership for school effectiveness.

6. Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on the principals' leadership styles and how each has relationship with teachers' morale in the senior secondary schools of Barkinladi and Langtang North LGAs in Plateau State. The relationship between principals' autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and teachers' morale was examined.

7. Method and Procedure

This section describes the method and procedures that will be adopted in conducting this study. Specifically, it is discussed under research design, population and sample, sampling technique, instruments for data collection, validity and reliability of instruments, procedure for data collection and method of data analysis.

7.1 Research Design

The study adopts correlational design. It is a statistical analysis of covariant data to determine a pre-existing relationship between two or more variables and allow predictions of outcomes base on causative relationships between the variables (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa(2004). This will be used to determine the leadership styles and relationship with teachers' morale.

7.2 Population

The population of the study comprised of the 39 principals and 229 teachers who have spent at least three years working together in the Senior Secondary Schools of Barkin Ladi and Langtang North Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Plateau State. The rationale for this choice is to ensure that principals and teachers had adequate opportunity to interact and become acquainted with each other within three years to be able to formulate feelings and expressions on the work environment.

7.3 Sample

The sample of this study comprised of 31(80%) principals and 137 (60%) teachers of the senior secondary schools drawn from the population of

the study. This sample size responded to the questionnaires.

7.4 Sampling Technique

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample. First stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample of schools. The principals of the schools selected automatically became the sample of principals because one principal is usually assigned to one school at a time. The next stage, sample of teachers was proportionately selected using the proportionate stratified sampling technique in order to obtain a good representation of the population.

7.5 Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments for data collection consist of two questionnaires. The instruments include: Principal Leadership Style Questionnaire (PLSQ); and Teachers' Questionnaire(TQ). The Questionnaires were structured at the Likert 5-point rating scales which were responded to by principals and teachers respectively. The scores categorized for measure of leadership styles were 50 for each of the three leadership styles, which is equal to 150 total score. The leadership style with the highest score becomes the dominant leadership style in practice by the principals. The scores categorized for measure of teacher morale were;

30-70 = Low Morale
 71-110 = Moderate Morale
 111-150 = High Morale

This categorization keeps equal intervals of scores to determine teacher morale level.

7.6 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validity of PLSQ, and TQ

The instruments for the study were placed on content validity. The aim was to ensure that the instruments covered the objectives of the study and become adequate for the main study. The instruments PLSQ, and TQ were validated by one expert in educational administration and planning, one expert in test and measurement, and one expert in educational psychology of the Faculty of Education, University of Jos. They

scrutinized the instruments and pointed out the errors found in each instrument which were corrected. Thereafter, they rated the instruments valid for the study.

Reliability of Instruments

i. Reliability of Principals' Leadership Style Questionnaire (PLSQ)

The instrument PLSQ, was tried out during the pilot study. It was meant to ensure its accuracy and consistency for the main study. In determining the reliability of this instrument, internal consistency was estimated with the use of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient technique with the help of computer analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The reliability coefficient obtained is .88, which signifies that the instrument is reliable for measuring autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles. This consideration is supported by the conditions recommended for reliability acceptance range by Cohen and Manion (2001) that the reliability coefficient of at least .70 and higher are regarded as good and high estimates reliability for research purposes. This instrument adapted the Leadership Style Survey Questionnaire (LSSQ) originally developed by Clark in 2004 in conjunction with the leadership styles chapter training in America.

iii. Reliability of Teachers' Questionnaire (TQ)

The validated instrument was tried out during the pilot study to establish its internal consistency which was estimated with the use of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient statistical tool with the help of computer analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The reliability index for section A was confirmed to be .84. This signifies that the instrument is reliable to measure autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles as perceived by teachers.

Section B of TQ reliability was confirmed to be .89. This implies that TQ is reliable to measure teacher morale in schools. TQ is a modified instrument of Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (PTO) which Bentley and Rempel (1980) found the instrument to have a strong reliability range

of .87 when he established its validity using the Indiana and Oregon school teachers.

7.7 Procedure for Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected using the PLSQ and TQ respectively. The face-to-face method of data collection will be employed for collecting the data with the use of the two different instruments. Thirty one of PLSQ, 137 of PLSDQ and 137 of TQ were distributed and all were returned.

7.8 Methods of Data Analysis

The data to be collected for this study will be analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools, such as frequency, percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). These were computed with the use of computer analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

8. Results

Research Question One: What is the leadership style used by principals in the Senior Secondary Schools in Plateau State?

Result is presented in Table one.

Table 1: Leadership Styles Used by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools as Perceived by Principals

S/N	Leadership Style	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Autocratic	9	29
2	Democratic	18	58
3	Laissez-faire	4	13
	Total	31	100

The results in Table one indicated that 29% of the principals are autocratic, 58% are democratic, and 13% are laissez-faire in their leadership practice as perceived by the principals. This is evident that most of the principals in the senior secondary schools of Plateau State operate democratic leadership style.

Table 2: Leadership Styles Used by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools as Perceived by Teachers

S/N	Leadership Style	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Autocratic	44	32
2	Democratic	63	46
3	Laissez-faire	30	22
	Total	137	100

Table two shows that the teachers perceived their principals to be 32% autocratic, 46% democratic, and 22% laissez-faire in their leadership styles. This indicates that the principals are more democratic in leadership style as perceived by the teachers.

Research Question Two

What is the morale level of teachers in the Senior Secondary Schools in Plateau State?

Result is presented in Table three.

Table 3: Teachers' Morale Level

S/N	Morale Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Low	4	3
2	Moderate	115	84
3	High	18	13
	Total	137	100

Table three indicates that 3% of the teachers have low morale, 84% teachers have moderate morale, and 13% have high morale. Result signifies that teachers in Senior Secondary Schools have moderate morale.

9. Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between principals’ leadership styles as perceived by their teachers and teachers’ morale in Senior Secondary Schools in plateau State.

Results are presented as follows;

Table 4: Relationship between Principals’ Leadership Styles as Perceived by Teachers and Teachers’ Morale

S/N	Variables	r	df	P	r ²
1	Autocratic leadership (independent)	-0.3753	135	0.0001	14.09%
2	Democratic leadership (independent)	0.6292	135	0.0001	39.58%
3	Laissez-faire leadership (independent)	-0.1343	135	0.118756	1.8%

Teacher Morale (dependent)

r = Correlation

df = Degree of freedom

p = calculated alpha level of significance

r² = coefficient of determination

Table four shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between principals’ autocratic leadership style and teachers’ morale. Result indicates $r = -0.3753$, $p = 0.0001$ ($p < 0.05$) at two tailed test of significance at $df = 135$. The null hypothesis is rejected since there is insufficient evidence to retain the hypotheses. This signifies a statistical significant negative relationship between autocratic leadership style and teachers’ morale. It implies that as the autocratic scores increases the morale scores decreases. This means that as the principals are more autocratic in leadership the morale of teachers’ decreases. The strength of the relationship is moderately weak. The coefficient of determination signifies that the relationship between principals’ autocratic leadership style and teachers’ morale is related at 14.09%.

Table four also shows that the correlation coefficient yielded results of $r = 0.6292$, $p = 0.0001$ ($p < 0.05$) at two tailed test of significance at $df = 135$. This signifies that there is a statistical positive significant relationship between democratic leadership style and teachers’ morale. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since there is insufficient evidence to retain the hypotheses. This signifies that as the principals democratic leadership style increases, the morale of teachers increases. Result indicated that there is positive moderately strong relationship. The coefficient of determination signifies that the relationship between

principals’ democratic leadership style and teachers’ morale is related at 39.58%.

Table four also shows that the correlation coefficient yielded result of $r = -0.1343$, $p = 0.118756$ ($p > 0.05$) at two tailed level of significance at $df = 135$. This signifies that there is no statistical significant relationship between the laissez-faire leadership style and teachers’ morale. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted since there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypotheses. Hence, it does not matter the principals’ laissez-faire leadership behaviors on teachers’ morale.

10. Discussion

The result of the study confirmed that principals in senior secondary schools dominantly practice the democratic leadership style. Principals perceived themselves to be democratic leaders and their teachers also perceived them to be democratic leaders. The result of this study is consistent with findings by Alsaigh and Hussain (2007) that the democratic leadership style was the most popular style used by Principals in Secondary Schools. Similarly, it is congruent with findings by Adeyemi (2010) who confirmed that the democratic leadership style was the most commonly used among principals of Senior Secondary Schools. This means that the principals operate open door policy in leadership whereby teachers will have the liberty

to consult and freely transact with principals. The implication of this finding is that teachers will be motivated with tendencies to have high morale and work commitment might be higher in schools with democratic leadership style. However, situations might determine the kind of leadership behavior to operate, whether autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire behaviors depending on need at a point in time to be able to operate effective leadership in school. The important idea to note is that not all situations warrant the use of democratic leadership style in school. However, it is essential to recognize that for effective leadership, the democratic leadership behaviors should dominate in leadership process to allow the opportunity for teachers to be innovative, creative, and resourceful for the development of the school. The democratic leadership style facilitates friendly atmosphere that could raise teachers' morale for greater commitment to work.

Secondly, teachers' morale level was confirmed to be moderate. This matches with the empirical investigation carried out by Romania (2010) which revealed that there was moderate level of teacher morale in the Secondary Schools. The implication is that perhaps teachers with moderate morale might not be so committed in the teaching job which could be detrimental to their students. Teachers with high morale will be productive, friendly, and dedicated to their work, while teachers with low morale can be aggressive, confrontational with conflicts all over the school. This is consistent with the idea of Egley and Jones (2005) that if morale dips significantly for any reason, absenteeism may increase, work performance may be low, a larger than usual number of employee may leave, and the organization as a whole can suffer set back. Therefore, there is need to ensure teacher high morale in school to facilitate effective teaching.

Thirdly, relationship confirmed in this study between the autocratic leadership style of principals and teachers' morale is a negative statistical significant relationship which represents that the more the principals are autocratic in leadership the more teachers' morale will be low. This result is in phase with findings by Adeyemi (2010) that the autocratic

leadership style weakens staff and they tend to get frustrated and can withdraw their creativity and know how. The implication is that teachers might be dissatisfied with behaviors of an autocratic leader and commitment to work may tend to reduce. Thus, the autocratic leadership style can frustrate the work force with poor relationship existing between the leader and the lead. Therefore, there is need for school administrators to use less the autocratic leadership style in order to boost teachers' morale for effective job performance. In a school system, academic achievement may be poor when teachers are not given the opportunity to be innovative and creative in the teaching job. The strict iron hand treatment of teachers by leaders should be minimized in order to raise their morale to obtain teachers cooperation for effective teaching.

Fourthly, result confirmed a positive significant relationship between the principals' democratic leadership styles and teachers' morale which signifies that, as the principals are more democratic in their leadership the morale of their teachers become higher. This result matches with findings by Romania (2010) who confirmed a positive, moderately strong and significant relationship between leadership dimensions and overall teachers' morale. The positive perceptions of the principals' leadership practices were significantly associated with more positive perceptions of the teachers' morale. This finding implies that the principals with democratic leadership style can boost teachers' morale. This is consistent with findings by William (2006) who found a significant relationship between democratic leadership style and teachers job satisfaction. The implication of this finding is that the democratic leadership style increases teacher satisfaction in the job and morale will be higher for greater commitment in the teaching job. This is in phase with the views of Achor (2009) that members working with a democratic leader often experience friendly atmosphere, cooperation and willingness to effective performance. This implies that satisfied teachers might have high morale and commitment to work might be greater to achieve set goals. This fact is compatible with findings by Bradley (2010) that the democratic leadership

improves high productivity and quality work, high morale, sense of group feeling and members feel secured and satisfied to belong. Hence, there is need to ensure strategies that will involve principals to use more of the democratic leadership style in schools for more productivity.

Fifthly, result revealed no statistical significant correlation between the principals laissez-faire leadership style and teachers morale. This implies that the laissez-faire principals may not boost their teachers' morale. This finding is in phase with findings by Randolph-Robinson (2007) that teacher morale can be predicted on the basis of the leadership style asserted by the principal. The implication of this finding is that effective teaching might not take place in such schools where the leader is careless about goal achievement. Teachers might lack confidence in their leader as such, respect and loyalty from teachers might be minimal, and morale could be low. Thus, strategies should be explored that will compel principals to use less the laissez-faire leadership style in schools.

The underlying implication of these findings is that leadership styles of principals impacts on teachers' morale. It implies that teachers' morale in school can be a reflection of teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership behaviors. If teachers perceive the leadership behaviors of their principals to be good, they will generally display high morale. This suggests that when morale is high teachers will exhibit willingness, enthusiasm and cooperation towards achievement of school goals.

11. Conclusion

School leadership has been viewed as an essential aspect of school administration because of its influential benefits towards achievement of school goals. Secondary schools can only be productive if there is efficient and effective leadership that would facilitate prudent management of both human and material resources in schools. Poor quality of leadership in schools has been associated with numerous problems among which is the inability of the principals to boost teachers morale in order to obtain their enthusiasm and cooperation for

effective teaching in schools. The principal of a school is an influencing and supporting agent for the school development. Hence, principals are expected to exhibit appropriate leadership style in schools to facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools.

12. Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Government should organize workshops, seminars and conferences for principals of secondary schools to update their knowledge in school leadership that will reflect strategies to boosting teacher morale for effective schools performance.
- Principals should be sent for in-service training to study leadership in school. This might give them some basic knowledge and skills for effective leadership in schools that could boost teachers' morale.
- The selection of teachers to principal position in Plateau State should be based on relevant academic qualifications and a wealth of long teaching experience as well as the consideration for individuals' acumen to enhance use of effective leadership styles in secondary schools.
- It is essential to create awareness on the importance of teacher morale in school effectiveness. As such, efforts should be made through conferences to educate both principals and teachers on the need for them to have the zeal and enthusiasm in the teaching job. Therefore, government should make effort to motivate teachers in order to boost their morale for effective performance in schools.

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