

Leadership Styles of Departmental Heads and Job Performance of Academic Staff in Universities in Enugu and Anambra States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study adopted survey design to investigate leadership style of departmental heads and job performance of academic staff in universities in Enugu and Anambra states. A sample of 220 academic staff was drawn from a population of all the 1,416 academic staff in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and Anambra State University (ANSU). Two instruments titled Heads of Departments Leadership Style Questionnaire and Academic Staff Performance Questionnaire (ASPQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and reliability of the instruments was established using the split half method. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.79 to 0.94, and 0.80 to 0.96 for HDLSQ and ASPQ respectively. Data collected were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance and independent t-test statistics. The results revealed, among others, that leadership style of departmental heads has significant influence on academic staff job performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation. Based on the results, it was recommended among others that Heads of departments should carry out their roles not for fault findings but in a manner that elicits job motivation and satisfaction among the academic staff.

Keywords: leadership, style, staff, job, performance.

Introduction

Leadership is very central in all human organizations such as educational institutions. Considering the plethora of activities carried out in the university and the number of

faculties, departments and human elements that constitute the school population, leadership is crucial. Each department in the university is therefore overseen by a Head of Department who controls both the human and material resources of the designated department. The departmental head is the sole authority within a department and is administratively responsible for its entire operations.

The academic staff constitute a significant portion of the human resource of the university. They occupy a unique and strategic position in the universities' machinery for the realization of set goals. Yufer (2022) stated that academic staff are the ones that would ensure that university goals are achieved through the unique tasks they perform across various institutions. According to Nnaji et al. (2023), teachers are the heart and soul of the education programme. In the university system, the academic staff are the ones who ensure that the goals of the university system are realized through the various services they render at their various departments, faculties and units. The services rendered by lecturers include teaching, academic advising, classroom management, students' evaluation, social support to students, records management and other related services.

Students are the major beneficiaries of teachers' services (Yobo, 2022). Jacob (2010) noted that academic staff of universities expend considerable length of time trying to grade papers, carrying out research, writing papers, supervising students' projects and teaching. The academic staff use a combination of their expertise and available school resources to achieve success in their duties. They also work under the leadership of heads of departments who are, by virtue of their positions, the leaders of their departments.

It is believed that the reputation of an organization is a reflection of her leadership. Beidan (2011) posited that no organization can grow beyond the level of its leadership. Uduma (2010) remarked that in the school setting, leadership plays a significant role, especially in these days when the society believes that the standard of education is declining. While some schools are thriving, some others are experiencing strike actions, strife, quarrels and other internal conflicts as a result of the leadership patterns of their administrators (Uduma, 2010). Leadership patterns are behavioural approaches or styles adopted by leaders in leading their followers. This refers to the style that a leader adopts in providing direction, implementing plans, motivating and organizing his/her followers.

Udilinja (2010) identified three major leadership styles observed among leaders in different organizational settings. These leadership styles are: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. The autocratic leader is not usually interested in group participation in decision-making. He/she takes decisions all alone and passes them down to the subordinates for immediate action and implementation without question.

He/she uses punishments, threats, queries and orders to achieve absolute obedience from their subordinates which makes the subordinates become disillusioned and less committed to their jobs (Akpan & Onabe, 2016).

The democratic leaders on the other hand demonstrate respect for every subordinate or employee. They involve subordinates in decision-making and assign responsibilities to them. This enhances subordinates' morale and commitment to duties. The laissez-faire leader does not exercise any significant degree of control over the conduct of his/her subordinates and decision-making is done by whoever is willing. Ekpo et al. (2023) noted that this sometimes brings about conflicts and confusion in the organization as subordinates do their wish.

However, Duke (2002) posited that no single leadership style is the best as none can be effective in all situations. Okon and Nnaji (2014) argued that democratic leadership style is the best because of its concern and regards for followers. This implies that in the university, the style of leadership employed by the university management, heads of departments and deans of faculties will determine the effectiveness of other activities, curricular and co-curricular in the university (Uko & Nnaji, 2016.).

Researchers have made efforts to explore the link between leadership and employee performance. Ohaeri (2009) conducted a study in Abia State University on the effects of leadership behaviours of heads of departments on academic staff level of commitment, conformity, co-operation and participation in school organizations. Her findings revealed a strong positive correlation between academic staff level of perception of their heads of department's leadership styles and their level of commitments, conformity, co-operation and participation. She therefore concluded that leadership consideration correlated positively with employee satisfaction. She further said that even though the findings could not be regarded as providing conclusive evidence on these problems, the fact remains that direct attention should be given to the possible role of departmental heads' leadership behaviours in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of academic staff. In another study, Elufom (2008) investigated the effects of school leadership on lecturer's attitude to work in polytechnics in south eastern Nigeria. The findings showed a significant relationship between school leadership styles and lecturers' productivity. The study concluded that lecturers were more productive when they participated in decision concerning them and when the leadership style was cordial.

Philips (2004) stated that workers tend to be more productive when given some element of freedom than those workers who may achieve little under frustrated, strict and great surveillance or monitoring. Momoh (2006) found that performance of workers was affected when the leadership acted radically in his decisions. Egbonta (2004) carried out a study to find out the pattern of heads of departments' leadership behaviour preferred by academic staff of universities in Lagos and discovered that the academic

staff preferred a consideration style of leadership behaviour to one that was only task or system oriented. The study further showed that academic staff are heterogeneous professional employees and often subordinated to an administrative framework. Aniebiet (2005) investigated the relationship between human resource management and academic staff job performance in Akwa Ibom State polytechnic and found out that there was a significant relationship between human resource management and academic staff job performance. The level of job performance of academic staff in tertiary institutions is a determinant of the way and manner they are managed (Kosek, 2022).

Teachers perform better in an environment where all the components that support teaching and learning are adequately provided. The job of the academic staff is such that requires high intellectual devotion, focus and high level of concentration. The school environment could therefore become so boring and damning if the administration is not playing a supportive role. The level of motivation of staff and their interest in their jobs go terribly low if they are not satisfied with the general work environment in which they perform their duties. In recent times, there has been growing criticism of academic staff and their job performance in Nigerian universities. It appears that the academic staff of some of these institutions are no longer dedicated and committed to their jobs. Aguma (2023) noted that stakeholders in education have lamented that students of some tertiary institutions learn very little as a result of non-commitment of lecturers to their duties. Students are not satisfied with the level of support they receive from their lecturers (Uko & Nnaji, 2015).

The story is the same also in Anambra and Enugu States which are contiguous states in eastern Nigeria that tend to share similar characteristics such as one state university in each of the states (Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology). Williams (2023) noted that stakeholders in education are concerned about the general performance of lecturers on whose hands the academic future and success of their wards are anchored.

Statement of problem

The role of universities in the social, political and economic development of any nation cannot be realized without the significant role played by the academic staff. Academic staff of universities are expected to carry out researches, teach the students and evaluate their performances during and at the end of every semester.

However, it has been expressed by parents, students and other stakeholders that academic staff of universities in Anambra and Enugu States appear not to be dedicated and committed to their jobs. Teaching, among the expected roles of academic staff, has not been accorded the necessary priority as expected as there are reported cases of academic staff that are in the habit of rushing their lectures when examinations have drawn near; students also complain of delay in their examination results and missing

scripts; graduating student's research is not given adequate attention by their supervisors and some of the lecturers also have been alleged of using other people to record scores and compute students' results.

While the searchlight is beamed on academic staff of these universities on how they perform their duties, there is no corresponding effort to ascertain the general school climate under which they (academic staff) do their jobs. The way and manner in which they are internally managed has not been given due attention. This study is therefore poised to investigate the influence of leadership style of departmental heads on the job performance of academic staff of state owned universities in Enugu and Anambra states.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

Ho1: Leadership style of departmental heads does not significantly influence academic staff job performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the performance of academic staff of Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all academic staff in Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Information from the personnel units of the registry of the two universities showed that the total number of academic staff in Anambra State University is 692 while that of Enugu State University of Science and Technology is 724, which gave a total of 1,416. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used for this study. The stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling technique were used for sample selection. The sample was made up of 220 academic staff drawn for the study. This comprised both male and female academic staff of all cadres in both universities.

Two instruments were used for data collection. The first instrument titled Heads of Departments Leadership Style Questionnaire (HDLSQ) was administered to the sampled academic staff. This instrument consists of two sections: A and B. Section A contained items seeking information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as sex, years of working experience and qualification. Section B is a four point Likert scale consisting of 30 items. The items on this section were designed to measure the sub variables of leadership which includes democratic, autocratic and laissez faire. Each of these variables was measured using 10 items. Each item has four response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) to Disagree (D) and

Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were required to tick one of the four options to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the items.

The second instrument, titled “Academic Staff Performance Questionnaire” (ASPQ), was administered to students to assess the performance of the individual lecturer under study. This instrument is a 4- point Likert scale consisting of 24 items. The items in this instrument were designed to elicit information on the sub variables of performance identified for the study which include lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students’ evaluation. Each of these sub-variables was measured using 6 items. Each item was accompanied with four response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were required to tick one of the four response options to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the item.

The instruments were validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability coefficients for the instruments were established using the split-half method. The reliability coefficient obtained for HDLSQ ranged from 0.79 to 0.94 while the reliability coefficient obtained for ASPQ ranged from 0.80 to 0.96. These reliability coefficients were considered high enough for the instruments to be considered reliable. Data collected was analyzed using one way analysis of variance and independent t-test analysis. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: Leadership style of departmental heads does not significantly influence academic staff job performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students’ evaluation.

Table 1: One-way ANOVA of influence of leadership style of departmental heads on academic staff job performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students’ evaluation

Academic staff performance	Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F
Lesson presentation	Between Groups	131.63	2	65.82	
	Within Groups	4832.92	217	22.23	4.96
	Total	4964.55	219		
Academic advising	Between Groups	119.19	2	64.32	
	Within Groups	4872.63	217	22.71	4.83
	Total	4991.82	219		

Classroom Management	Between Groups	163.78	2	81.89	
	Within Groups	4217.62	217	19.44	4.21*
	Total	4381.4	219		
Students' Evaluation	Between Groups	173.62	2	86.81	
	Within Groups	2716.56	217	12.52	6.93*
	Total	2890.18	219		

critical $F = 3.14$

Examination of table 1 showed that there is a significant influence of leadership style on academic staff performance in Anambra and Enugu State universities in terms of lesson presentation ($F=4.96$, $P.<.05$), academic advising (4.83 , $P.<.05$), classroom management ($F=4.21$, $P.<.05$) and students' evaluation ($F=6.93$, $P.<.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained because the calculated F-ratios of 4.96, 4.83, 4.21 and 6.93 were found to be greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.14 given at .05 alpha level with 2 and 217 degrees of freedom. This finding implies that leadership style of departmental heads significantly influences academic staff job performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation.

Given the significant F-ratio, a post hoc analysis using the Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison test was done. The result of the analysis is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Fishers LSD multiple comparison test analysis of influence of leadership style on academic staff job performance

Variable	Leadership style	Democratic (n=53)	Laissez faire (n=97)	Authocratic (n=75)
Lesson presentation	Democratic	18.47	-0.88	-2.02
	Laissez faire	-3.88	16.66	-1.14
	Autocratic	-5.52	-3.27	17.80
msw=22.25				
Academic advising	Democratic	15.56	-1.28	-1.82
	Laissez faire	-4.20	16.84	-0.5
	Autocratic	-3.17	-1.15	17.38
msw=22.71				

Classroom management	Democratic	16.03	-1.27	-2.29
	Laissez faire	-3.25	17.30	-1.02
	Autocratic	-2.04	2.06	18.32
			msw=19.44	
Students evaluation	Democratic	15.83	-1.27	-2.29
	Laissez faire	-3.66	16.72	-1.02
	Autocratic	-1.80	2.09	17.71
			msw=12.52	

***significant at .05**

- Group means are placed on the diagonal
- Differences between group means are placed above the diagonal
- Fishers LSD t-value are place below the diagonal

The results in table 2 shows that lecturers who perceived leadership of departmental heads as democratic had significant higher mean score for lesson presentation than those who perceived it as autocratic ($t=-5.52$) and laissez faire ($t=-3.88$). Similarly, those who perceived leadership as laissez faire had a significant higher mean score than those who perceived it as autocratic ($t=-3.88$). This result means that lecturers who perceived leadership as democratic present their lesson better than those who perceived it as autocratic and laissez faire. With reference to the influence of leadership style on academic advising, lecturers who perceived leadership style as democratic had significant higher mean score for academic advising than those who perceived it as laissez faire ($t=-.4.20$, autocratic ($t=-3.17$). Similarly, those who perceived leadership style as laissez faire had a significant higher mean score than those who perceived it as autocratic ($t=-3.23$). This result means that lecturers who perceived the leadership style as democratic advice students better than those who perceived it as laissez faire and autocratic.

With reference to the influence of leadership style on classroom management, lecturers who perceived leadership style as democratic had significant higher mean score for classroom management than those who perceived it as laissez faire ($t=-.3.25$), autocratic ($t=-2.04$). Similarly, those who perceived leadership style as laissez faire had a significant higher mean score than those who perceived it as autocratic ($t=-2.04$). This result means that lecturers who perceived the leadership style as democratic manage their classrooms better than those who perceived it as laissez faire and autocratic.

With reference to the influence of leadership style on students' evaluation, lecturers who perceived leadership style as democratic had significant higher mean score for students' evaluation than those who perceived it as laissez faire ($t=-3.66$), autocratic ($t=-1.80$). Similarly, those who perceived leadership style as laissez faire had a

significant higher mean score than those who perceived it as autocratic ($t=-1.80$). This result means that lecturers who perceived the leadership style as democratic evaluate students better than those who perceived it as laissez faire and autocratic.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the job performance of academic staff of Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between the performance of academic staff of Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology

Academic Staff Performance	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-cal
Lesson presentation	ANSU	122	18.18	2.72	1.64
	ESUT	98	17.67	1.89	
Academic advising	ANSU	122	17.39	2.07	2.21
	ESUT	98	16.73	2.31	
Classroom management	ANSU	122	16.83	1.83	-1.33
	ESUT	98	17.13	1.53	
Student evaluation	ANSU	122	17.52	3.62	1.07
	ESUT	98	17.02	3.27	

df=218, critical $t=1.96$

The results in table 2 revealed that the calculated t- value of 1.64 for lesson presentation, -1.33 for classroom management, and 1.07 for students' evaluation were all found to be smaller than the critical t-value of 1.96 needed for significance at 0.05 level of significance with 218 degree of freedom. But the calculated t- value of 2.21 for academic advising was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 needed for significance at .05 level of significance with 218 degree of freedom. These results therefore mean that there is no significant difference between performance of academic staff of Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology in terms of lesson presentation, classroom management and students' evaluation; but there is a significant difference in terms of academic advising.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study revealed that leadership style of departmental heads significantly influence academic staff performance in terms of lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation. The result further pointed out in the comparison among group means that lecturers who perceived

leadership as democratic will perform better in lesson presentation, academic advising, classroom management and students' evaluation than those who perceived leadership as autocratic and laissez-fair. The reason for the outcome of this hypothesis could be explained in terms of remarks made by Philips (2004), that workers tend to be more productive when given some element of freedom than those workers who may achieve little under frustrated, strict and great surveillance or monitoring. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Elufom (2008) who investigated the effects of school leadership on lecturers' attitude to work in polytechnics in south eastern Nigeria, and found a significant relationship between school leadership styles and lecturers' productivity. The study concluded that lecturers were more effective when they participated in decisions concerning them and when the leadership style was cordial. The outcome of this study is also in line with studies by Egbonta (2004) and Aniebiet (2005). Their studies confirmed significant influence of leadership styles of departmental heads on academic staff performance. In other words, the significant result suggested that the level of job performance of academic staff is a determinant of the way and manner they are managed. The result of this hypothesis suggests that academic staff who were commended and encouraged by their heads of departments and deans of faculties for any accomplishment and hardwork will perform better than those dehumanized by their heads of departments and dean of faculties through criticisms.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference between the performance of academic staff of Anambra State University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology. This finding implies that the performance of academic staff in terms of lesson presentation, students' evaluation and classroom management were almost the same in the two universities. The result of this hypothesis agrees with Jacob (2010) who noted that academic staff of universities expend considerable length of time trying to grade papers, carrying out research, writing papers, supervising students' projects and teaching. This implies that the performance of academic staff of the two state universities studied were the same. The finding also aligns with Yufer (2022) who stated that academic staff are the ones that would ensure that university goals are achieved through the unique tasks they perform across various institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that academic staff in the universities will perform their jobs optimally and effectively when their heads of departments adopt democratic leadership style which is a leadership style characterized by involvement of subordinates in decision-making, delegation of responsibilities and care for staff welfare.

Recommendations

1. Heads of departments should endeavour to establish cordial work relations with the academic staff under them in order to promote a friendly atmosphere that will enhance their job performance.
2. Heads of departments as leaders should carry out their leadership roles not for fault findings but in a manner that elicits job motivation and satisfaction among the academic staff.
3. Heads of departments should maintain an open door policy where all staff are free to see and discuss matters of concern with them.
4. Heads of departments should endeavour to attend leadership workshops and seminars to learn more on how best to coordinate and manage the academic staff.
5. Heads of departments must ensure equity in their dealings with their academic staff.

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