PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ONDO STATE

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effects of participative leadership on organizational performance in selected local governments in Ondo State and identified challenges hindering its effective application. Objectives included assessing the impact of participative leadership, exploring its relationship with organizational performance, determining the extent of worker participation in decision-making, and investigating development challenges. Data were collected via unstructured interviews and structured questionnaires from primary and secondary sources. Twenty-four stakeholders were interviewed, and 300 questionnaires were administered across six local governments in three senatorial districts. Findings revealed that participative leadership is not widely adopted, with key barriers including concerns about leaking official secrets and losing political structure. The study recommends involving subordinates in daily decision-making, highlighting the benefits that outweigh the challenges, and emphasizes teamwork between leaders and subordinates to enhance organizational performance

Keywords: Participative Leadership, Democracy, Local Government, Organisation Performance, Ondo State.

Introduction

In recent years, participative leadership has emerged as a significant shift from traditional management styles within organizations. Unlike autocratic or top-down approaches, participative leadership involves employees in the decision-making process, valuing their input and considering them as the most critical resource within the organization (Beil and Mjoil, 2014). This shift acknowledges that employees are not just tools for executing tasks but are integral to the strategic development and success of the organization. By actively involving employees, organizations can

harness their diverse perspectives, creativity, and expertise, leading to more innovative solutions and a stronger commitment to organizational goals.

The success of work organizations increasingly depends on their ability to motivate employees towards achieving organizational goals and objectives. The responsibility for this motivation largely falls on the type of leadership that governs the organization. Effective leadership is reflected in how leaders involve their followers in the daily operations of the organization, which can enhance subordinates' ability to take initiative, make decisions, and participate in work relationships aimed at accomplishing assigned tasks and ultimately achieving the organization's goals. This participative approach fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among employees, as they feel their contributions are valued and impactful.

The qualities of a leader within an organization are often mirrored in the leadership styles they adopt. These styles depend on the leader's traits, the nature of the work or tasks to be performed, and the goals to be achieved within the organization. The chosen leadership style significantly influences the performance and sustainability of the organization (Igba, Anwar & Harder, 2015; Shagnak, 2016). Leadership styles can be differentiated by the degree of freedom given to employees in decision-making and their ability to take the initiative in performing assigned tasks. For example, a transformational leader might inspire and motivate employees through a compelling vision, while a transactional leader might focus on structured tasks and reward-based systems. Participative leadership, in particular, stands out because it fosters collaboration and collective decision-making, which can lead to higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.

This study focuses on participative leadership, a style that encourages leaders and subordinates to work together through the exchange of ideas, joint decision-making, and providing necessary support to employees in performing their tasks. This leadership style can significantly boost subordinates' performance by enhancing their self-esteem through participation in decision-making (Polston-Murdoch, 2013). When employees are actively involved in setting goals and determining the means to achieve them, they are more likely to be committed to the outcomes, resulting in improved performance and productivity.

In the 21st century, organizations have access to abundant financial and human resources for producing goods and services. However, achieving sustainable productivity relies on the ability to coordinate these resources effectively to meet organizational goals. This critical responsibility lies with the leader. In today's global business environment, the benefits of participative leadership cannot be overstated, especially in the face of economic challenges faced by organizations and nations. As markets become more competitive and resources scarcer, organizations must leverage all available talents and foster an environment where every team member feels empowered to contribute to their fullest potential.

Many studies on leadership focus on how different leadership styles impact organizational performance, either positively or negatively. This paper aims to explore the impact of participative leadership on organizational performance, specifically within the public sector. Using selected local governments in Ondo State as a case study, this research will provide insights into how participative leadership can influence performance in government organizations. By examining the specific context of local governments, this study seeks to understand the unique challenges and benefits of implementing participative leadership in the public sector, where bureaucratic structures and political considerations often play a significant role in decision-making processes. This research will contribute to the broader understanding of leadership dynamics in public administration and offer practical recommendations for enhancing organizational performance through participative leadership.

Research Questions
  i.   What is the effect of participative leadership on the organizational performance in selected local governments?

    ii.   To what extent are workers participation in decision making process in selected local governments?

   iii.   What are the challenges constraining participative leadership in the selected local governments?

Research Objectives

    i.   To examine the effect of participative leadership on the organizational performance in selected local governments

    ii.   To interrogate the extent to which workers participate in decision making process in selected local governments

   iii.   To investigate the challenges constraining participative leadership in the selected local governments.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Leadership Theory

The Democratic Leadership Theory, propounded by Mary Parker Follett in the 1920s, serves as the foundation for participative leadership. This theory perceives management as the act of achieving goals through people, emphasizing coordination and employee engagement as critical elements. According to this theory, leaders can maximize the potential of their teams through joint decision-making, shared responsibility, open communication, and employee empowerment. It views the leader and subordinates as members of a cohesive team that must collaborate to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

The relevance of this theory to the study lies in its potential to foster a strong organizational culture characterized by enhanced employee job satisfaction, creativity, innovation, and improved engagement and motivation. Previous research supports the notion that the high self-esteem subordinates gain from sharing decisions and responsibilities with their superiors leads to increased motivation and higher performance (Bell & Mjoli, 2004; Clareless, 2004; Ochieng et al., 2023). However, the theory is not without its shortcomings. It can be time-consuming and requires leaders to relinquish some control and power, which may lead to conflict and disagreement if communication and trust are breached.

Path-Goal Theory

The Path-Goal Theory, introduced by Robert House in 1971, explains how leaders can influence subordinates' behavior towards goal attainment. Leaders can achieve this by creating a clear path to goal achievement, removing obstacles, providing necessary resources and support, and rewarding progress. The theory also underscores the importance of involving subordinates in decision-making.

For the theory to be effective, leaders must understand their subordinates' needs, abilities, and motivations. Its relevance to this study lies in its emphasis on the power of influence that a leader has over subordinates and how leaders can direct subordinates toward goal-oriented behaviors to achieve organizational objectives. By understanding and addressing the needs and motivations of their team members, leaders can create an environment that promotes efficiency and goal achievement.

Both the Democratic Leadership Theory and the Path-Goal Theory provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which participative leadership can enhance organizational performance. While the Democratic Leadership Theory focuses on collaboration and shared decision-making, the Path-Goal Theory highlights the importance of clear guidance and support in achieving goals. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of participative leadership on organizational effectiveness.

Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, both primary and secondary data collection methods were employed. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select the required respondents. Data were gathered using a well-structured and validated questionnaire and personal interviews.

Sampling Techniques and Respondents

Twenty-four stakeholders were purposively sampled for interviews, ensuring that key individuals with relevant insights were included. Additionally, a total of 300 structured questionnaires were administered to workers randomly selected from various departments. Personal interviews were specifically conducted with the selected stakeholders to gather in-depth information.

Data Collection Process

For each local government area (LGA), fifty questionnaires were distributed, and four stakeholders were interviewed, ensuring a comprehensive approach to data collection. The respondents included individuals directly affected by the leadership styles in their respective local governments, as these styles influence the overall output and performance of the local governments.

Study Areas

The study focused on six local government areas (LGAs) out of the eighteen LGAs in Ondo State. These LGAs were Akoko North West, Owo, Akure South, Ondo West, Okitipupa, and Ese Odo. This selection was made to ensure adequate representation of the state and to provide a broad understanding of the leadership dynamics across different regions within the state.

The research methodology employed a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods, along with purposive and random sampling techniques. This approach ensured a comprehensive and representative collection of data from various local governments, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the effects of participative leadership on organizational performance.

Table 1. Design outlay for selecting study area/location, questionnaire distributed, number of stakeholders interviewed.

S/N	Senatorial District	Local Government Area	Number of questionnaire distributed /respondents per local government	Number of stakeholders interviewed
1	Ondo North	Akoko North West	50	4
		Owo	50	4
2	Ondo Central	Akure North	50	4
		Ondo East	50	4
3	Ondo south	Okitipupa	50	4
		Ese Odo	50	4
Total	3	6	300	24

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 2. Design outlays for questionnaire for questionnaire distribution and retrieval

S/N	Selected LG	No of questionnaires administered per LG	Total of questionnaires retrieved per LG
1	Akoko North West	50	47
2	Owo	50	45
3	Akure North	50	43
4	Ondo East	50	46
5	Okitipupa	50	43
6	Ese Odo	50	39
Total		300	263

Table 3. Total percentage of Respondents responses on description of decision-making process in selected local government.

Local Government	Democratic/Participative		Top-down Approach		I don't know		Total (%)
	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)	
Akoko North West	5	1.90	39	14.82	3	1.14	47
Owo	2	0.76	40	15.20	3	1.14	45
Akure North	3	1.14	37	14.06	3	1.14	43
Ondo East	2	0.76	43	16.34	1	0.38	46
Okitipupa	4	1.52	37	14.06	2	0.76	43
Ese Odo	3	1.14	35	13.30	1	1.14	39
Total	18	7.22	233	87.78	12	5.70	263

Source: Field Work, 2024.

From Table 3, above 87.78% respondents described the decision-making process in the local governments in Ondo state as top-down approach, 7.22% respondents described it as participative/democratic while 5.70% claimed they don't know if the decision-making process in the local government is democratic/participative or top-down approach.

Table 4. Total percentage of respondents' responses on positive effect of participative leadership on the performance of selected local governments in Ondo state

Local Government	Yes		No		Total
	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)	
Akoko North West	10	3.80	37	14.01	47
Owo	2	0.76	43	16.34	45
Akure North	3	1.14	40	15.20	43
Ondo East	8	3.04	38	14.44	46
Okitipupa	5	1.90	38	14.45	43
Ese Odo	8	3.04	31	11.78	39
Total	36	13.68	227	86.22	263

Source: Field Work, 2024.

From Table 4 above, 86.22% of respondents claimed that participative leadership has no positive effect on performance of local governments in Ondo state.

Table 5. Total percentage of Respondents responses on imposition of decision on staff.

Local Government	Yes		No		I don't know		Total
	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)	
Akoko North West	39	14.82	6	2.28	2	0.76	47
Owo	37	14.06	5	1.90	3	1.14	45
Akure North	39	14.82	2	0.76	2	0.76	43
Ondo East	38	14.44	4	1.52	4	1.52	46
Okitipupa	41	15.58	1	0.38	1	0.38	43
Ese Odo	34	12.92	3	1.14	2	0.76	39
Total	228	86.69	21	7.98	14	5.32	263

Source: Field Work, 2024.

From Table 5 above, 86.69% of the respondents claimed that decisions are usually imposed on the staff in the local governments in Ondo state, while 5.32% claimed they don't know if decisions are imposed.

Discussions of Major Findings and Achievement of Research Objectives

Objective I: The Effect of Participative Leadership on Organizational Performance in Selected Local Governments in Ondo State
Table 4 presents the data on the positive effect of participative leadership on the performance of selected local governments in Ondo State. According to the findings, 86.22% of respondents claimed that participative leadership has no positive effect on the performance of local governments in Ondo State, while 13.68% claimed that there is a positive effect. The interview results indicated that the prevalent leadership style within the organizations tends towards autocratic, which explains why the participative style could not positively affect organizational performance.

Objective II: The Extent of Workers' Participation in the Decision-Making Process in Selected Local Governments
Table 5 describes the extent of workers' participation in the decision-making process in selected local governments. The study showed that the majority of subordinates are not engaged in decision-making, which prevents them from benefiting from the participative leadership style. Interview results clearly indicated that decision-making is seen as the exclusive preserve of top officials and cannot be compromised. The theoretical framework for this study, which includes the Democratic Leadership Theory and Path-Goal Theory, emphasizes the need for leaders to collaborate with subordinates and involve them in the decision-making process. This approach tends to provide intrinsic motivation, propelling employees toward higher performance. Most employees are enthusiastic about carrying out tasks that allow them to interact with their superiors, improving their self-esteem. Unfortunately, decision-making in the selected local governments is concentrated at the top management level. This finding aligns with a study conducted by Fapetu & Siyaka (2022) on a public organization in Ondo State.

Objective III: The Challenges Constraining Participative Leadership in the Selected Local Governments
The findings from the interviews revealed several challenges, including the feeling of losing relevance as decisions could be made by subordinates without the input of superiors if subordinates are not restricted. There is also the fear that subordinates could take over the political structure, which may not favor the superiors. Additional concerns include the potential for leaking official secrets if subordinates are involved in decision-making, as well as feelings of insecurity and threatened ego among superiors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the 21st century, organizations face challenges beyond the control of their managers, posing significant obstacles to achieving their goals and objectives. The ability of an organization to effectively deliver goods and services to the public largely depends on the quality of its human resources. The potential of these resources can be maximized through the leadership style adopted by the organization's leaders. Participative leadership has proven to be particularly beneficial, as it involves subordinates in the decision-making process. This inclusion fosters collaboration between employees at all levels, enhancing organizational sustainability and performance.

Participative leadership empowers employees by valuing their input and encouraging their involvement in critical decisions. This approach not only boosts employee morale and job satisfaction but also harnesses diverse perspectives and expertise, leading to more innovative solutions and improved organizational outcomes. By creating an inclusive environment, participative leadership helps to build a strong organizational culture where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Incorporate Subordinates into Decision-Making: Organizations should actively involve subordinates in the decision-making process. This can be achieved by establishing mechanisms for regular feedback, consultation, and collaborative decision-making. By doing so, employees will feel more engaged and committed to the organization's goals.

Foster a Collaborative Environment: Encourage all stakeholders, regardless of their levels or status, to collaborate and work as a team in decision-making. This collaborative approach can be facilitated through team meetings, workshops, and brainstorming sessions that bring together diverse perspectives.

Provide Training and Development: Invest in training and development programs that equip both leaders and subordinates with the skills needed for effective collaboration and decision-making. These programs should focus on communication, conflict resolution, and leadership development to ensure that all employees can contribute effectively.

Enhance Communication Channels: Establish and maintain open and transparent communication channels within the organization. Regular updates, open forums, and feedback mechanisms can help ensure that all employees are informed and involved in the organization's activities.

Promote a Culture of Trust: Build a culture of trust where employees feel safe to express their opinions and ideas. Leaders should demonstrate trust in their subordinates by delegating responsibilities and encouraging autonomy in task execution.

Measure and Evaluate: Implement systems to measure and evaluate the impact of participative leadership on organizational performance. Regular assessments can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the participative approach is effectively contributing to the organization's success.

By adopting these recommendations, organizations can create a more inclusive and collaborative work environment, enabling them to better compete in today's dynamic business landscape. Participative leadership not only enhances employee engagement and satisfaction but also drives organizational performance and sustainability.

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