

Nigerian Public Administrators' Leadership Styles and their perceived Effectiveness

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i9/2286>

Published Date: 06 September 2016

Abstract

Leadership is a phenomenon that have been widely studied but there are few studies of leadership in the field of public administration compared to other fields. The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceived leadership effectiveness of Nigerian public administrators' leadership practices based on Bass's full range leadership theory (FRLT). Data were collected through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires administered to a randomly selected sample of 240 department heads in the 30 local governments in Osun State, Nigeria. Regression results shows a statistically significant relationship between local public administrators' perceived leadership effectiveness and transformational leadership factors ($p < 0.05$). The model accounted for 25% of the variance in perceived leadership effectiveness. This suggests that there are other factors affecting the perceived leadership effectiveness other than leadership styles. The implications for positive social change include the opportunity to move the Nigerian local administrators' leadership practices towards transformational leadership practices based on FRLT. Transformational leadership is effective, efficient and ethical leadership style which in turn may discourage corruption and help build a sustainable public institutions that are responsive and accountable to the Nigerian public.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, International and Comparative Leadership, Leadership, Leadership Styles, Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Many of the citizens of African countries are dissatisfied with service delivery and a perceived lack of political accountability among their local officials (Bratton, 2012). Although the focus of Bratton's study was on elected officials, the study uncovers substantive and procedural challenges to local government administration in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Bratton (2012), local governments in Africa are ineffective and inefficient because of mismanagement and resource constraint; limited technical competencies; political and fiscal

subordination to state and federal governments; top-down mandates instead of bottom-up demands; lack of accountability, responsibility, and responsiveness; lack of fiscal revenue base; lack of material and organizational means to govern effectively; reliance on state authorities, international donors, or foreign funded non-government organizations (NGOs) for resources; undeveloped and underdeveloped tax base; tax avoidance and evasion; the difficulties of taxing informal activities; and a representation gap between patrons (citizens) and agents (elected officials). Bratton's observation is very true in Nigeria where various studies have blamed leadership ineptitude, corruption, an ill-conceived development framework, and general inefficiency in the public sector as some of the problems hindering Nigeria local and national development (Adebisi, 2012; Adeyemi, 2012; Adesopo, 2011 and Iheriohanma, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between the Nigerian public administrators' leadership practices and their perceived leadership effectiveness based on the full range leadership theory (FRLT). The study sought to answer the question is there a statistically significant relationship between the Nigerian public administrators' leadership practices and their perceived effectiveness based on the FRLT and using the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) for data collection. The study is significant because it sheds light on the perceived effectiveness of the Nigerian local government leadership practices.

Literature Review

Leadership is a phenomenon that has been widely studied yet it has no universally accepted definition (Steers, Sanchez-Rundle & Nardon, 2012) and like many social science constructs, leadership is believed to be an arbitrary and subjective social construct (Karp & Helgo, 2008). Steers, Sanchez-Rundle, and Nardon (2012) quoted Bennis (1989) as saying that "leadership is like beauty; it's hard to define, but you know it when you see it" (p. 479). Part of the reasons why there has been no consensus on the definition of leadership lies in its complexity and how different cultures define the construct itself, and in the initial assumptions made about the subject (Karp & Helgo, 2008; Steers, Sanchez-Rundle, & Nardon, 2012). This study does not attempt to define leadership but work within the existing definitions and framework to operationalize and measure the perceived effectiveness of public administrators' leadership practices in the 30 local governments in Osun State, Nigeria. The theoretical foundation for this study is the FRLT. FRLT comprises of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). It is a continuum of leadership that goes from the ineffective to the most effective leadership style. According to Schimmoeller (2010) transformational leadership (TFL) and transactional leadership (TSL) theory is one of the most researched and influential frameworks for understanding leadership in any situation and the theory has been found to be valid in both public and private sectors (Adanri, 2016; Hemsworth, Mutera, & Baregheh, 2013).

TFL is described as the process by which leaders motivate their subordinates to perform beyond their own expectations by setting out and communicating a shared vision and clear task outcome, and encouraging them to do more for the group than individual self (Michel, Lyons & Cho, 2011, p. 493). TFL provides ethical conduct and a clear sense of purpose (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). TFL exercises influence rather than power or authority over followers and motivates followers to achieve beyond what they could have done by themselves without the influence and motivation of the leader (Boga & Ensari, 2009). TFL applies to leaders who motivate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary

outcomes and in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. They help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs, empower them and help them align their objectives and goals with the organizational goals. Transformational leaders has the ability to influence the behavior of their subordinates and get them into foregoing self-interest for the good of their group. They build trust and instill confidence in their subordinates; they stimulate subordinates by questioning status quo, assumptions, and traditions; they encourage organization learning, risk taking, and innovation and help set vision for the organization (Boga & Ensari, 2009).

According to Parris and Peachey (2013), "great leaders create a vision for an organization, articulate the vision to the followers, build a shared vision, craft a path to achieve the vision, and guide their organizations into new direction" (p. 377). TFL is most effective in the time of crises or uncertainty than in a stable organizational. In their study, Boga and Ensari (2009) found that organizations managed by TFL are perceived as more successful under situations of high organizational change in comparison to low organizational change.

Van Eeden, Colliers, and van Deventer (2008) examined the personality traits of managers exercising different leadership styles using three different types of questionnaires and models to measure personality traits associated with different style of leadership. They found that there is a direct correlation between the character of TFL style and the personality traits of managers who use a transformational style. Some of the personality traits or behaviors associated with TFL style include strategic, innovative, and analytical thinking; critical information evaluation: a high sense of responsibility; perseverance; visionary, ambition; and a motivational and assertive disposition that allows for participation and involves others in the decision making process.

The second style of leadership along the continuum of the FRLT is transactional leadership (TSL). TSL is a process by which leaders reward their subordinates for following their direction (Michel, Lyons & Cho, 2011; Boga & Ensari, 2009). Transactional leaders reward or punish their followers' contingent upon following their direction and subject to task performance. The key components of transactional leadership include contingent reward, passive management-by-exception, and active management-by-exception (Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Ayob, 2011). Contingent reward behavior is based on the use of incentives to motivate followers. Passive management-by-exception "behaviors involve the use of corrective actions in response to subordinate mistakes" while active management-by-exception "look[s] for subordinates' mistakes and enforcing rules to avoid future mistakes" (Michel, Lyons, & Cho, 2011, p. 494). The last component of the full range leadership model is laissez-faire leadership (LFL), which represents the absence of leadership.

The FRLT is represented by nine distinct factors (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003, p. 262; Schimmoeller, 2010; Van Eeden, Cilliers & Deventer, 2008) that are measured by the MLQ 5X. The MLQ 5X has been widely used to measure the nine factors of the FRLT (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). The instrument consists of 45 questions, 36 of which are used to measure the nine factors of leadership. The instrument measures five factors of TFL: (a) idealized influence (attributed), (b) idealized influence (behavior), (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. TSL factors measured by the instrument are: (a) contingent reward, (b) management by exception (active), and (c) management by exception (passive). The last factor measures LFL attributes. The remaining nine questions are used to measure leadership

and organization outcome in terms of leadership effectiveness (LE), employees making extra effort (EE), and employees' satisfaction (ES) (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

TFL have been found to have positive correlations with subordinate outcome of intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, creativity, justice perceptions, work engagement, job performance, positive psychological capital, organizational performance, organization citizenship, and leader effectiveness (Michel, Lyons, & Cho, 2011; Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). On the other hand, the contingent reward component of TSL has been found to have a positive relationship with subordinate outcomes such as extra effort, organizational commitment, managerial satisfaction, and effectiveness. Passive management-by-exception and active management-by-exception have shown a negative relationship with subordinate outcomes (Michel, Lyons & Cho, 2011). Studies have also shown that organizations with TFL styles are more effective than those with TSL styles and TSL styles are more effective than LFL styles (van Eeden, Colliers & van Deventer, 2008). Following years of research on the subject of leadership, Bass and his colleagues found that the most effective leaders are those that combine transformational and transactional leadership behaviors (Michel, Lyons, & Cho, 2011).

Despite the fact that the FRLT has been widely used in measuring and understanding leadership as a construct, the theory is not without criticism. Some studies have argued that the FRLT and the tools used to measure its attributes failed to measure other leadership behaviors such as consulting, empowering, recognizing, clarifying roles and objectives, and short term planning (Michel, Lyons, & Cho, 2011). Michel, Lyons, and Cho (2011) argued that unlike the MLQ 5X, the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS) captures all components of leadership behaviors inherent in the full range leadership model. Despite this criticism, FRLT and MLQ remain the most widely used model and tool in the study of organizational leadership.

Research Methodology

This quantitative research study was based on the general premise of whether Nigerian public administrators' leadership practices were perceived to be effective. The research question therefore was: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the Nigerian public administrators' leadership practices and their perceived leadership effectiveness. The null hypothesis was there is no statistically significant association between the local government administrators' leadership practices and perceived leadership effectiveness. The dependent variable was perceived leadership effectiveness while the independent variables were the various dimensions of transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership attributes measured by MLQ 5X. MLQ has been widely used in studies similar to this study (Hemsworth, Muterera, & Baregheh, 2013).

The MLQ-5X questionnaire is a self-administered survey instrument which uses the five point Linkert scale: (4) frequently if not always, (3) fairly often, (2) sometimes, (1) once in a while, (0) not at all, to rate how often the participants demonstrate certain leadership behaviors. The instrument measures the attributes of each of the leadership styles in the full range leadership spectrum. MLQ-5X is the standard instrument used to collect data related to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, and it has been determined valid for understanding executive leadership at the local government level (Hemsworth, Mutera, & Baregheh, 2013).

The questionnaire was administered to randomly selected sample of 240 from a population of 330 (N=330). The return rate was 76%. Of the 182 questionnaire returned, 12

were completed by officers, supervisors, or managers that were not part of the local government management team, and one questionnaire was returned without response to any of the questions. As a result, 13 of the questionnaires were removed from the analysis. The useable data was therefore based on 169 returned questionnaire, which in effect gave a 70% net survey return rate.

The level of measurements was based on Likert Type – Ordinal scales. The data was treated for missing assumptions and tested for parametric assumptions. The data failed the parametric assumptions as a result non-parametric analysis was conducted. The statistical hypothesis was that there is no statistically significant relationship between Osun State local government administrators' leadership styles and perceived leadership effectiveness ($H_0: r = 0$). The two variables in my study were perceived leadership effectiveness (dependent variable) and local administrators' leadership styles (independent variable).

Bivariate statistics was used to test the hypotheses. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), "The most common bivariate statistic is the bivariate correlation (often, simply called "correlation"), which is a number between -1 and +1 denoting the strength of the relationship between two variables" (p. 122). A positive correlation means an increase in the independent variable will result in an increase in the dependent variable, while a negative correlation means an increase in the independent variable will result in a decrease in the dependent variable. The closer the number to one, the more the strength of the correlation. The null hypothesis will be rejected if the correlation coefficients between the variables were statistically significantly different from zero ($p \leq 0.05$) irrespective of the direction of the coefficients (Sullivan, 2012). Linear regression analysis was used to examine the strength of the association between the variables.

Research Findings And Discussion

Spearman's correlation shows statistically significant correlation between the local government administrators' leadership and perceived leadership effectiveness, $r = 0.27$ ($p < 0.05$) therefore the null hypothesis ($H_0: r = 0$) was rejected. Regression results show that there was statistically significant association between the State local government administrative leadership practices and perceived employees job satisfaction [$R^2 = .248$, adjusted $R^2 = .234$, $F(3, 165) = 18.150$, $p < .000$]. The r value of .27 represents the simple correlation between leadership and organizational outcome while R^2 value of .248 tells us that leadership styles can account for 25% of the variation in perceived leadership effectiveness; there might be many factors that explains the variation, but the model can only explain 25% of it. The standard error of the estimate shows that 37% of the variation in perceived leadership effectiveness cannot be explained by leadership styles alone which means there must be other variables that influence perceived leadership effectiveness as well. Summaries of the regression model are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Model Summary

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² _{adj}	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.498 ^a	.248	.234	.37085

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-faire Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

Table 2

ANOVA Summary

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.488	3	2.496	18.150	.000
Residual	22.693	165	.138		
Total	30.181	168			

Dependent Variable: Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-faire Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership

Findings from the analysis show that there is statistically significant relationship between State local government administrators' leadership styles and perceived leadership effectiveness. The regression model also shows that the administrators' leadership styles account for 25% of the variance in the perceived leadership effectiveness. These findings suggest that the local government needs effective and ethical leadership which are the skills that can be learned through training, personal development and practice.

Conclusion

The importance of leadership in organizational outcome cannot be over stated. Transformational leadership predicts organizational outcome better than transactional leadership. Transformational leadership and practices can make local government more effective and efficient in its service delivery and be responsive to the public. Nigeria needs strong and vibrant local government for rural and urban development, poverty alleviation, and for addressing illiteracy, crime, youth delinquency, unemployment, infrastructural deficiencies among others. Transformational leadership brings real change. Transformational leadership and organizational practices will make local government responsive and effective in service delivery and help develop a sustainable institutional capacity.

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