

Perception of Leadership Styles on Staff Performance in Primary Schools: A Case Study of Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State

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Abstract

This study examined the Perception of Leadership Styles on Staff Performance in Primary Schools: A Case Study of Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was made up of head masters in all both private and public primary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. Simple random technique was used to sample 50 head masters used for the main study. The instrument used for this study Name Leadership Questionnaire (LEQ). The instrument was subjected to face and construct validity by three experts from the Curriculum and Education Technology Department, Federal University of Education Kontagora, Niger State. Pilot study was carried out on 20 Head Masters to determine the reliability of the instrument, using Cronbach alpha statistics. A reliability computation on (functions of leaders) showed 0.77 alpha level and (measure put in place in promote the leadership style) showed 0.70. Results; There was no significant difference between mean of gender of functions of leaders in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area while there was significant difference between mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions and t-test was used to analyze research hypotheses. Conclusion; in Kontagora Local Government Area, the leadership style exhibited by head teachers directly influences staff performance in primary schools. Recommendations; head teachers in Kontagora should encourage shared vision-building and teamwork. By inspiring teachers, head teachers can organically boost morale and commitment.

Keyword: Leadership Styles, Functions of Leaders, Primary School and Staff Performance

Introduction

Man is a social animal which relate and associate with each other, this implies that whenever man come together for work, social gathering, club, religious activity, formal organization, there must be a speaker for the group. Even in a family there is a person referred to as head of the “family”. In offices we have managers, Directors and Chief executive officers. In the nation we have presidents, in state, we also have Governor, and also Local Government has a Chairman. In our secondary and primary schools there are principals and head teachers. All these people mentioned are referred to as leaders of the schools. A good leader sees that things are according to plan in his organization as the head. The word leader is a common word used by many people, the task of leadership is great, and cannot be overemphasized.

Kniffin *et al* (2020) opined that “Some writers have given the impression that leadership is a synonym for management. This assumption is not correct because leaders are found not only in the management hierarchy but also in informal work group. Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it toward goals. So, management activities such as planning, organizing and decision making are dormant cocoons until the leader triggers the power of motivation in people and guides them towards goals”. Leadership is concerned with the implementation of those policies and decision which assist in directing the activities of an organization towards its specific goals.

Leadership is the process of influencing the activities and behavior of an individual or towards goal achievement in a given situation. Malakyan (2014) says the nature of leader is largely determined by the nature of the follower and that of the society or situation in which the leader is operating. In Kontagora Local Government, most of the primary schools heads do not have influence on the performance of their staff in primary schools because, it was observed that, some teachers show up late to school at their own convenient time, while others do not even bother showing up, and there is zero accountability. Factors that contributes to such zero accountability are: Lack of appropriate leadership skills, lack of qualified leaders and lack of training on the part of the existing leader with poor personality trait and leaders’ poor attitude to work have effect on leadership style and staff performance.

Leadership in education is a critical factor in determining school effectiveness and staff performance. It involves influencing, guiding, and directing teachers toward the achievement of educational goals. Recent studies emphasize that leadership is not only administrative but also motivational and relational Modbush (2021) argues that effective school leadership improves teaching quality and student outcomes. Similarly, Habibi et al. (2025) noted that leadership practices significantly shape school climate, teacher commitment, and organizational performance.

Leadership style refers to the pattern of behavior adopted by leaders in managing and directing subordinates. In educational settings, the most common leadership styles include autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Recent empirical studies indicate that democratic leadership enhances teacher participation, collaboration, and job satisfaction. Eze and Nwankwo (2020) found that teachers perform better under leaders who involve them in decision-making processes. Conversely, autocratic leadership, which emphasizes authority and control, may ensure discipline but often reduces staff leadership. However, leadership characterized by minimal supervision, can lead to weak coordination and reduced accountability (Iswari, 2025).

The relationship between leadership style and staff performance has received considerable attention in recent research. Leadership style influences key variables such as motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. Leadership behavior has both direct and indirect effects on employee performance through motivation and organizational climate. In the school context, Busari and Othman (2024) reported that leadership style significantly affects teachers' punctuality, instructional delivery, and overall job effectiveness. Similarly, Schermuly *et al* (2022) found that participatory leadership improves teacher morale and commitment, while autocratic practices tend to suppress initiative.

School leaders perform multiple roles that are essential for effective administration. These include supervision of instruction, staff motivation, decision-making, communication, and financial management. Leithwood *et al* (2021), highlighted that effective school leadership involves setting direction, developing people and redesigning the organization to support learning. Abdullahi (2024) further notes that delegation of duties, monitoring, and evaluation are critical functions that enhance staff productivity. Failure to perform these roles effectively can result in poor coordination, low motivation, and reduced performance among teachers.

Promoting effective leadership in schools requires the adoption of best practices such as participatory decision-making, delegation, and continuous supervision. Oladimaji *et al* (2024) emphasize that involving teachers in decision-making enhances their sense of ownership and improves performance.

In addition, training and professional development are essential for improving leadership effectiveness. UNESCO (2023) reports that capacity building programmes for school leaders significantly improve school management and learning outcomes. Furthermore, effective supervision and motivation systems are necessary to ensure accountability and high staff performance (Okafor *et al*, 2024). Leaders' poor attitude to work has been identified as a critical factor influencing employee outcomes and organizational performance. Recent studies emphasize that leadership behavior affects employee performance both directly and indirectly through mediating variables such as motivation and job satisfaction, while organizational factors such as culture and ethical climate act as moderators (Wang *et al.*, 2025). Drawing on Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby *et al.*, 2010), this study proposes leaders' negative attitudes shape decision-making processes, which in turn influence workplace that outcomes.

This study is anchored on the Transactional Leadership Theory as advanced by Bernard M. Bass. Transactional Leadership Theory emphasizes structured supervision, clear expectations, and the use of rewards and punishments to influence followers' performance. The theory posits that effective leadership is achieved through a system of exchanges between leaders and subordinates, where compliance is obtained through contingent reinforcement mechanisms.

In the context of primary schools, transactional leadership manifests in the way head teachers establish clear roles, set performance targets, and monitor teachers' adherence to institutional standards. Head teachers who adopt this leadership style rely on structured systems such as performance appraisals, supervision schedules, and accountability measures to ensure that teachers meet expected outcomes.

A key component of this theory is contingent reward, where leaders provide incentives—such as recognition, promotion opportunities, or commendations—to staff who meet or exceed performance expectations. Conversely, management-by-exception allows leaders to intervene when standards are not met, often through corrective actions or sanctions. These mechanisms are

intended to maintain order, enhance efficiency, and ensure goal attainment within the organization.

Relating this to staff performance in primary schools, the theory suggests that teachers are more likely to perform effectively when there are clearly defined expectations and when rewards are directly tied to their performance. The perception of fairness, consistency, and transparency in the reward and punishment system plays a significant role in shaping teachers' motivation and productivity. When head-teachers effectively implement reward systems and enforce accountability, teachers may demonstrate improved commitment, punctuality, instructional delivery, and overall job performance. However, the theory also implies that over-reliance on extrinsic motivation may limit creativity and intrinsic commitment among teachers. Therefore, while transactional leadership can enhance short-term performance and compliance, its effectiveness depends on how well head-teachers balance rewards, supervision, and disciplinary measures.

In this study, Transactional Leadership Theory provides a lens for examining how head-teachers' use of structured supervision, reward systems, and accountability mechanisms influences teachers' performance in primary schools. It helps to explain the relationship between leadership practices and staff outcomes, particularly in environments where formal rules and performance standards are emphasized.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate Perception of leadership styles on staff performance in primary schools: A Case Study of Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to;

1. Identify various functions of leaders in primary school in Kontagora local Government Area.
2. Examine the measure in promote the leadership style in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area.
3. .Find mean of gender of functions of leaders in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area.

4. Find out mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the mean of various functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area?
2. What is the mean of the measure in promoting the leadership style?
3. What are the mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area?
4. What are the mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and was tested in the study at 0.5 alpha level

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style.

Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was made up of head masters in all both private and public primary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. Simple random technique was used to sample 50 head masters used for the main study. The instrument used for this study Name Leadership Questionnaire (LEQ). The instrument contains three sections A, B and C. Section A contains information respondents' bio-data, Section B captured items on functions of leaders in primary schools while section C contains opinion of head teachers on measure put in place in promote the leadership style. The instrument was subjected to face and construct validity by three experts from the Curriculum and Education Technology Department, Federal University of Education Kontagora, Niger State. Experts' suggestions formed the basis for the final draft of the questionnaire. Pilot study was carried out on 20 Head Masters to determine the reliability of the instrument, using Cronbach alpha statistics. A reliability computation on (functions of leaders) showed 0.77 alpha level and

(measure put in place in promote the leadership style) showed 0.70. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions and t-test was used to analyze research hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What is the mean of various functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area Primary Schools?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Motivation of Biology Teachers toward use of ICTs for Instruction

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	The leader breaks down large objectives into actionable, short-term targets in the school.	50	3.90	1.018	Agree
2	The leader delegates tasks effectively, matching assignments to individual strengths in the school.	50	3.54	1.161	
3	The leader provides the necessary resources and tools required to get the job done in the schools.	50	3.65	1.159	Agree
4	The leader provides regular, constructive feedback on performance rather than waiting for annual reviews in the school.	50	3.66	1.373	
5	The leader remains calm and supportive under pressure in the school.	50	3.75	1.058	Agree
Grand mean			3.70		

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of various functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area Primary Schools. This indicates that all the five items scores more than 3.0 decision mean, since grand mean = 3.7 which imply that all the items were accepted, an indication that the functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area Primary Schools is positive; since all items motivation show agreed based on decision mean of 3.0.

Research Question Two: What is the mean of the measure in promoting the leadership style in primary schools?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Measure in Promoting the Leadership Style in Primary Schools in Kontgora?

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	I am adaptable and adjust my leadership approach based on the specific situation or crisis.	50	3.78	1.217	Agree
2	I prioritize the professional development and mentoring of my staff in the school.	50	3.81	1.232	Agree
3	I encourage innovation and am open to new ideas proposed by the staff in the school.	50	3.75	1.196	Agree
4	I foster a collaborative environment where team members of my staff trust one another.	50	3.83	1.116	Agree
5	I actively listen to employee concerns and perspectives before jumping to conclusions.	50	3.68	1.151	Agree
Grand mean			3.77		

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of measure in promoting the leadership style in primary schools. This indicates that all the five items scores more than 3.0 decision mean, since grand mean = 3.77 which imply that all the items were accepted, an indication that the measure in promoting the leadership style in primary schools is positive. Since all items on measure in promoting the leadership style show agreed based on decision mean 3.0.

Research Question Three: What are the mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender of Functions of Leaders in Kontagora Local Government Area

Group	N	Mean	Sd
Male	23	20.99	3.45
Female	27	21.63	3.87

Table 3 shows gender of functions of leaders of the schools in Kontagora local Government Area. Male had mean of $\bar{X} = 20.99$, SD = 3.45 and Female had mean of $\bar{X} = 21.63$, SD = 3.87. The mean of female was slightly higher than their male counterpart by 0.63. The implication is that, there is no disparity between genders of functions of leaders of the schools in Kontagora local Government Area.

Research Question Four: What are the mean of gender of measure put in place in promoting the leadership style?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender of Measure Put in Place in Promoting the Leadership Style

Group	N	Mean	Sd
Male	23	18.20	2.78
Female	27	22.28	4.32

Table 3 shows acceptance of gender of measure put in place in promoting the leadership style. Male had mean of $\bar{X} = 18.20$, $SD = 2.78$ and Female had mean of $\bar{X} = 22.28$, $SD = 4.32$. The mean of male was slightly higher than their female counterpart by 0.92. The implication is that, there is little disparity between gender of measure put in place in promoting the leadership style in Kontagora primary schools.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of Mean of Gender of Functions of Leaders in Kontagora Local Government Area

Participants	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value
Male	23	20.99	3.45	0.43	48	0.89
Female	27	21.63	3.87			

$p > 0.05$

Table 5 shows the t-test analysis of mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area.. From table the t-cal of 0.43, $df = 48$, with $p=0.89$. Since $p > 0.05$, hypothesis one was not rejected. Therefore, there was no significant difference between mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style in primary school.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of Mean of Gender of Functions of Leaders in Kontagora Local Government Area

Participants	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-cal	df	p-value
Male	23	18.20	2.78	0.49	48	0.02
Female	27	22.28	4.32			

$p \leq 0.05$

Table 6 shows the t-test analysis of mean of gender of functions of leaders in Kontagora local Government Area. From table the t-cal of 0.43, $df = 48$, with $p=0.02$. Since $p < 0.05$, hypothesis

two was accepted. Therefore, there was significant difference between mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area.

Discussion of Results

There was no significant difference between mean of gender of functions of leaders in primary schools in Kontagora local Government Area. This is agreement with the study of Nkwonta, Ghasi, & Onyejiaku (2018) who investigates the effect of gender on leadership style of selected manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between male and autocratic leadership style. It was also discovered that there is a significant positive relationship between female and transformational leadership. The study also shows that there is a significant positive relationship between ascribed gender and laissez faire leadership style. Also align with the study of Ashfaq., Abdul Halim., and Md Lazim (2015) who investigates the measurement of the effectiveness of leadership styles for organizational commitment in Pakistan. It revealed that both transformational leadership style and transactional leadership styles have significant effect on organizational commitment.

There was significant difference between mean of gender of measure put in place in promote the leadership style. This is concur with the finding of Dexter (2023) who carried out study on gender leadership styles in higher education: A transformational leadership study. The study results showed a statistically significant degree of transformational leadership reflected in female and male leaders within the university by study participants. Study results also showed no statistically significant difference in participant perceptions of transformational leadership by leader gender.

Conclusion

In Kontagora Local Government Area, the leadership style exhibited by head teachers directly influences staff performance in primary schools. Democratic and transformational leadership yield highly positive results, fostering teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Conversely, autocratic or laissez-faire approaches often lead to lower morale, poor commitment, and reduced overall productivity. Teachers in Kontagora primary schools perform best when administrators adopt democratic (participatory) leadership styles. Involving staff in decision-making and valuing their input significantly boosts morale and commitment.

Recommendations

1. Head teachers in Kontagora should encourage shared vision-building and teamwork. By inspiring teachers, head teachers can organically boost morale and commitment.
2. Leadership should prioritize creating a motivating work environment rather than relying strictly on top-down autocratic directives.
3. Educational administrators should adopt a democratic and transformational leadership approach. Actionable recommendations include implementing regular capacity-building workshops, establishing open communication channels, and linking staff promotion and recognition strictly to performance and merit.

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