



Demographic Factors Differentiating between Leadership Styles among Nigerian Workers

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at finding the demographic variables that differentiated between the leadership styles used by some Nigerian workers. Data were collected from 138 participants including 98 males (71 Yorubas and 27 Ibos) and 31 females (21 Yorubas and 10 Ibos). Analysing the data with the t-statistics, the results revealed significant ethnic difference in autocratic leadership orientation and not in democratic leadership style. There was no significant difference between the two leadership styles due to gender, marital status, and religion. The analysis with One-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences due to age and educational qualification in both leadership orientations. It can be concluded that the participants manifested the leadership styles in the same way. The findings have implications for leadership development and organizational management strategies tailored to meet the diverse needs of the workforce. Future research has been recommended to collect more data from the public sector and additional demographic factors such as socio-economic status and organizational tenure. Moreover, a longitudinal study is also recommended to assess how leadership preferences evolve over time and their impact on employee outcomes and organizational success.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the framework for getting things done any where at any time. It is a ubiquitous concept that needs to be studied and reviewed from time to time. Many theories and perspectives have been put forward to describe leadership. There are trait theories which describe leadership in terms of personality qualities; behavioral theories which describe leadership in terms of what leaders do; and situational theories which describe leadership in terms of situations and circumstances surrounding the exercise of leadership authority.

The behavioral style approach to leadership proposed by McKenna (2000) was used in this study. This approach is based on the view that leadership processes do not reside solely in the person, but could be cultivated as distinctive patterns of behavior. This approach is more concerned with identifying and describing the behavior of leaders. The leader should determine the type of behavior that would enhance the performance and productivity of his subordinates depending on the context.

The behaviors of leaders have been described by researchers differently. Likert (1967) described the notion that leadership style consists of two extreme positions which are: autocratic and democratic. Consideration and initiating structure were isolated and identified as dimensions of leadership behavior, by researchers at the Ohio State University (Fleishman & Harris, 1962). The managerial grid developed by Blake & Mouton (1964), is another approach which depicts different leadership styles. Concern for people and concern for production were identified as separate dimensions of leadership behavior.

Leadership behavior research became popular with the research at two American Universities: Ohio State and Michigan Universities which carried out research independently of each other in the 1960s (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Katz & Kahn, 1951; Likert, 1961, 1967). They attempted to identify and describe the important behaviours involved in leadership. Leadership research is supposed to be continuous because when things go well, we attribute it to the leader's skill. When things go badly, we blame the leader's ineptitude. Hence, it is very important to determine which behavior is associated with effective performance or otherwise.

The aim of this study is to determine the demographic variables that influence the preference for a particular leadership style among some Nigerian workers.

White & Lippitt (1960) performed the first classical experiment on three leadership styles: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Eze (1995) described the characteristics of these three leadership styles. The autocratic leader usually stays aloof from the group; wields absolute power; makes all decisions; issues orders and commands; assigns tasks to members and maintains master-servant relationship. The democratic leader, on the other hand, follows consultative approach; encourages group participation in decision-making and problem solving; seeks group cooperation and collaboration; is sympathetic and empathetic to group members and maintains a master-master relationship. The laissez-faire leader maintains a non-interference policy and allows the group, complete freedom to act as it likes. Indeed, only the first two styles are known to exist in practice and as a result, other theorists based their postulations on the two styles with each theorist using different titles to designate them (Eze, 1995). Thus, there are the 'Initiating Structure' and 'Consideration' by Stogdill & Coons (1957); Theory X and Theory Y by McGregor (1960); 'Concern for production' and 'Concern for People' by Blake and Mouton (1964).

According to Eze (1995), Nigerian leaders and managers share Taylor's assumptions about the worker who is seen as having by nature, negative attitudes to organizational work, and as an economic man who must be bullied to work and exploited to achieve targets.

Eze (1988, 1995); Adebayo & Ogunsina (2011); Yusuf, Muhammed & Kazeem (2014); Omolayo (2004, 2012); Fashola, Akanni & Ajila (2017); Olayisade & Awolusi (2021); Pembu, Usman, Kwajaffa & Ametefe (2022); Kenku & Ogunkuade (2023) have all found that leadership styles can significantly influence employee productivity, organizational performance and effectiveness in Nigerian industries and organizations.

Eze (1988) collected data from 102 managers and supervisors from the private sector comprising 72

managers from the foreign-owned private sector and 30 managers from the indigenous private sector in Nigeria. The sample was drawn from various companies located in all the states of the federation, who participated in different types of management development programmes, and who volunteered to participate in the study. They responded to a self-constructed but reliable and valid questionnaire which contains items to which subjects were supposed to describe effective leader. The results of data analysis indicated that the Nigerian leaders in the sample were more authoritarian than democratic in their managerial attitudes. There was no significant difference in the degree of leadership style shown by managers in foreign-owned and indigenous sectors. Both of them were predominantly authoritarian in attitude. The sample did not include managers from the public sector. But since the two sectors included, are known (in the literature) to provide more effective leadership than the public sector, the results can be safely generalized.

Kenku & Ogunkuade (2023) examined the role of leadership style and demographic characteristics as determinants of workers' commitment. In a sample of 100 bank workers from Abuja, Nigeria, they found that employees with higher scores on transformational leadership style experienced more commitment than employees with lower scores on transformational leadership style ($t(98) = 1.79; p < .05$). Furthermore, result revealed that there is no significant gender difference on workers' commitment ($t(98) = -1.7; p > .05$). Finally, the result demonstrated no significant age difference on workers' commitment ($t(98) = .08; p > .05$).

Torres & Ferdman (2001) used the Return Potential Model by Jackson (1996) to guide the assessment of differences between the norms for leadership styles of Americans and Brazillians. Two situations describing two leadership continua, varying from autocratic to participative, were presented to a sample of 58 Americans and 74 Brazillians working for government organizations in both countries. Participants were asked to give their approval rate for each leadership behaviour. Results showed that Brazillians have a preference for less participative leadership style than Americans. The results further showed that country of participants is related to their approval for leadership style. The results have implications that information about approval for

leadership styles can be used to enhance the quality of cross cultural leadership training.

Littrell (2002) compared and reported 'desirable' leadership traits, and 'actual' leadership traits exhibited by managers and supervisors as defined by responses on the original English and a Chinese Language translation of the Ohio State University Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire XII (LBDQ XII). The author collected data from 220 managers and supervisors in two hotels in the interior of China. Both expatriate and indigenous Chinese managers were included in the sample. All supervisors were Chinese. A significant difference (at $P < .05$) between Chinese and non-Chinese expatriates was observed for the factor, 'Tolerance of Freedom' which is similar to participative or democratic style of leadership. Interestingly, the Chinese managers indicate more tolerance of freedom than the expatriate managers. Nonetheless, Chinese supervisors believed that the ideal manager should be even more tolerant of freedom than their managers (at $p < .01$). This may be interpreted to mean that supervisors prefer democratic leadership style than their managers.

Investigating the influence of perceived leadership styles on work satisfaction and job commitment, Chukelu (2002) collected data from 150 employees including 75 subjects from each of the private and public sector organizations. Analysing the data with 2X2X2 ANOVA, she found that leadership style has a significant effect on commitment at $p < .05$. The democratic - oriented employees in the sample were more committed to their job. The results further showed that sector and leadership style have separate effects on work satisfaction at $p < .05$. Subjects in the public sector are more satisfied with their work and they are more democratic than those in the private sector. Democratic - oriented employees in the sample were more satisfied with their work.

In order to investigate some aspects of how a group functions under different types of group atmosphere and different types of leadership, experiments were conducted by Lewin and his colleagues with groups of children (Lippit & White, 1986). The groups were engaged in mask-making, model-making, and similar activities. Different styles of leadership: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire were introduced by the adult experimenters. The groups appeared to react

very favourably to the imposition of democratic leadership practice.

Uzonwanne (2017) investigated the influence of some psycho-demographic variables like age and gender on the Transformational and Transactional leadership styles of 60 administrative staff of government ministries in Lagos, Nigeria. Results show that none of the demographic variables tested revealed any significant impact on the Transformational and Transactional Leadership styles of these leaders. It is concluded that the leaders manifested these leadership styles in the same way, despite some striking non-significant differences in the demographic variables. Finding may assist in the informed decisions of executive leadership training and recruiting. It is recommended that national and state administrative management should examine and adopt various strategies to train leaders for a balance of leadership orientation.

Hassnain (2022) collected data from 192 employees in private and public organizations to investigate the causal effects of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on the performance and motivation of employees in Pakistan. The analysis of data with Pearson correlation indicated that the democratic leadership style is positively related to the performance and motivation of the employees. The results further provided that an authoritative leadership style will create sense of contemptuousness in the subordinates and thus, not appropriate to achieve optimal performance from junior workers in today's work environment. Hence, instead of intimidating the subordinates, managers of today need to motivate and encourage their workers to behave in a more interactive, helpful, and friendly way, and allow empowerment for problem-solving.

Koturi & Anbazhagan (2014) investigated the effects of age and gender on the leadership styles of the workers in India. The study revealed that the democratic leadership style is the most dominant style and that age and gender have their own influence on the workers' leadership styles. The study also revealed that with increase in age, relatively lesser authority is exhibited by the workers and that gender too, is found to influence the leadership styles of the workers. However, the direction of the gender influence was not stated.

Hypothesis:

From the foregoing review of literature, it is pertinent to hypothesize that Nigerian workers would prefer the democratic leadership style and that this preference would be influenced/moderated by age, sex, education, religion, marital status and ethnicity.

METHODS

Participants: 138 participants used for this study included 98 males (71 Yorubas and 27 Ibos) and 31 females (21 Yorubas and 10 Ibos). The participants were randomly selected from among the MBA executive part-time students who were employees of various public and private sector business organizations in Lagos, Nigeria.

Instrument: The Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ) developed by Fleishman (1953) was administered to collect data from the participants. It has 48 items including 28 items measuring Democratic leadership orientation and 20 items measuring Autocratic leadership orientation. The instrument has been validated using Nigerian samples. Fleishman obtained 0.98 (Spearman Brown), 0.87 (Test-Retest) for democratic leadership style; and 0.78 (Spearman Brown), 0.75 (Test-Retest) for autocratic leadership style for American samples while Omolayo (2004) reported a test-retest reliability coefficient of .65 (autocratic) and .74 (democratic) for Nigerian samples. Ejimofor (1987) correlated the SBDQ with Organizational Commitment questionnaire (OC) to obtain concurrent validity coefficient of .336 for autocratic and .142 for democratic leadership styles. Fashola, Akanni & Ajila (2017) in the most recent study relied on the reported psychometric properties for the instrument.

Procedure: Participants were asked to respond to questionnaire items which describe the preference for both leadership styles/orientations on a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = Satisfactory to 1 = Not Satisfactory. The questionnaire which was developed in English Language, was administered in its original language. It was administered to the participants in the classroom during their lecture in Business Organization and Administration. It took less than 30 minutes on the average for them to complete the filling of the test form.

Research Design: This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design.

Data Analysis: The scores/data were analysed with the use of t-statistics to find differences between any two groups of participants at a time (e.g. gender, marital status, religion and ethnicity) and One-way ANOVA to find differences among any three or more

groups of participants at a time (e.g. groups according to age and educational levels).

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in tables below.

Table 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and t-statistics according to Gender, Marital Status, Religion and Ethnicity.

Leadership		Democratic				Autocratic		
		n	X	SD	t	X	SD	t
Gender	Male	105	60.75	16.40		49.49	11.55	
	Female	32	61.22	13.36	-.15	47.13	12.49	.99
Marital Status	Married	105	62.10	15.96		48.81	11.90	
	Single	31	56.58	14.46	1.7	49.77	11.42	-.40
Religion	Christianity	117	61.40	15.05		49.48	12.16	
	Islam	15	58.33	19.95	.72	47.47	7.05	.63
Ethnicity	Yoruba	92	60.15	16.32		50.66	10.49	
	Ibo	37	62.89	14.53	-.89	46.00	13.96	2.07*

Note: * = $p < .05$, $df = 136$; t -critical = 1.65

Results show that female participants are more democratic while male participants are more autocratic. However, there was no significant gender difference. Married participants are more democratic while Single participants are more autocratic. There was no significant difference between the two categories of participants. Christians have higher scores in both democratic and autocratic orientations than Moslems. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the two categories of participants in any direction. Ibo participants have a higher score in Democratic orientation while Yoruba participants have a higher score in Autocratic orientation. There was no significant difference with respect to Democratic orientation. However, the difference in Autocratic orientation was significant.

Table 2
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations according to Age and Education.

Leadership		N	Democratic		Autocratic	
			X	SD	X	SD
Age	21-30 years	5	54.20	18.62	45.20	15.35
	31-40 years	40	55.50	12.89	46.88	11.86
	41-50years	40	64.78	13.97	49.40	11.43
	51-60 years	22	60.59	20.82	46.18	11.33
	60+ years	9	60.11	16.03	57.00	8.14
	Education	School Cert.	40	61.60	17.04	47.75
GCE, A/L' OND, NCE		29	60.55	15.74	50.69	9.57
HND, B.Sc.		35	60.06	15.97	48.89	12.95
M.SC.		3	60.00	24.88	48.33	15.04
Professional		6	63.83	6.77	54.33	6.44

Results indicate that subjects in the age bracket from 21-50 years (productive years) have higher scores in both Democratic and Autocratic orientations. The subjects also have lower scores in Democratic and Autocratic orientations with increase in their age. The subjects have lower scores in both Democratic and Autocratic orientations from the Second Degree level (17 years of formal education) to School Certificate level of education (12 years of formal education). The subjects with a Professional Qualification had the highest score in both leadership orientations.

Table 3
One - way ANOVA Summary Table according to Age

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F
Democratic: Between Groups	1897.88	4	474.47	1.98
Within Groups	26641.98	111	240.02	
Total	28539.86	115		
Autocratic: Between Groups	957.50	4	239.38	1.81
Within Groups	14666.05	111	132.127	
Total	15623.55	115		

Note: Not Significant, df = 4, 111, Table F(.05) = 2.44

Results show that the differences described in table 2 are not statistically significant due to age.

Table 4
One - way ANOVA Summary Table According to Education

Sources of	Sum of	df	Mean Square	F
	Squares			
Democratic: Between Groups	118.13	5	23.63	.09
Autocratic: Between Groups	944.42	5	88.88	.62
Within Groups	18958.69	132	143.63	
Total	19403.11	137		

Note: Not Significant, df = 5, 132, Table F(.05) = 2.29

Results show that the differences described in table 2 are not statistically significant due to the level of education.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that only ethnicity influence the preference for autocratic leadership orientation. The result did not support the hypothesis. However, this result partially supports the expectation of Eze's (1988) finding. The result is similar to the finding of Uzonwanne (2017) that showed no significant difference in the demographic variables on the transformational and transactional leadership styles studied by him. Just like him, it can be concluded that the participants manifested the leadership styles in the same way. This is surprising because the findings ought to have implications for leadership development and organizational management strategies tailored to the diverse needs of the workforce. The choice between Autocratic and Democratic leadership styles, carries significant implications. Autocratic leadership is characterized by centralized decision-making and minimal employee involvement, while democratic leadership emphasizes participatory decision-making and employee empowerment.

This study is limited by the scope and size of the sample. The research focused specifically on 138 employees that were surveyed. Future research should include a larger sample size as well as give a consideration to different occupations. Comparison of results from different occupations may provide insight into whether or not leadership style and demographic characteristics of employees have different impacts on employees working in diverse fields.

Suggestion for Further Research

Data for this study can be expanded to include samples from the public sector and different occupations. Maybe, this will generate more significant results. Moreover, there is need to revalidate and obtain fresh psychometric properties for SBDQ with more Nigerian samples. The revalidation will make room for more clarifications to ascertain the suitability and continued use of the instrument in Nigeria. Further research could also explore additional demographic factors such as socio-economic status and organizational tenure, to further elucidate the complex interplay between individual characteristics and leadership preferences in the Nigerian context. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess how leadership preferences evolve over time and have impact on employee outcomes and organizational success.

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