

# **PRINCIPALS' DEMOCRATIC AND AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLES AS CORRELATES OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated principals' democratic and autocratic leadership styles as correlates of administrative performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational research design. The population was made up of the 258 public senior secondary schools and 8,452 teachers in these schools. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 40 senior secondary schools and 588 teachers who participated in the study. The instruments used for data collection were self-designed questionnaires titled, "Principals' Democratic and Autocratic Leadership Styles Questionnaire (PDALSQ) and Administrative Performance Questionnaire (APQ)". The PDALSQ and APQ were validated and reliability index of 0.87 and 0.851 were established using Cronbach alpha. Pearson Product Moment was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with ratio 0.05 alpha level. It was found among others that: democratic and autocratic styles have a strong positive relation with administrative performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It was concluded that principals' leadership styles such as democratic and autocratic leadership styles significantly influence administrative performance of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study recommended among others that the application of democratic and autocratic leadership styles should be based on the level of cooperation and work situation.

**Keywords:** Democratic, autocratic, leadership, administrative

## **Introduction**

School administration is the process that is concerned with the use of methods, principles and practices to establish, develop, and execute the goals, policies, plans and procedure necessary to achieve the objectives of education (Nwokafor, Ighalo, Ogunsanwo & Nwankwo, 1983). The implication of the above definition is that administration is the process of using available human and material resources in education carefully, and systematically for the achievement of educational objectives.

Yemisi (2011) in the same vain sees administration as the process of directing and coordinating educational resources (human and material) and utilizes them wisely to achieve the specific goals of the educational policy. Ogbonna in Ogbonna (2009) sees administration as a process which entails the utilization of human, financial, and materials resources in maximizing the realization of goals-objectives.

Peretomode (1996) defines administration as that which is concerned with the performance of executive dwellers, the carrying out of policies and decisions to fulfill a purpose and the controlling of the day to day running of an organization. From the array of these definitions, it can be deduced that administration is a careful and systematic process of using human and material resources in the implementation of educational policies and plans. Secondary school administration is therefore an integral part of educational administration that is concerned with students, staff, materials, rules, regulations and policies that govern the secondary school system. This implies that secondary school is a formal organization that is made up of students, the teaching and non-teaching staff working corroboratively for the achievement of common educational goal. In secondary school, the principal and the staff work as a team to ensure the growth and development of the child. Some of the basic fact about school administration is that it must strive to create a community of learners who are both physically and mentally fit and who have acceptable behaviour as prescribed by the society. A good school administration must acknowledge the importance of team work and this must be inculcated into the school decision making (Musaazi, 1982).

The definition of school leadership will be inconclusive without explaining the terms 'School' and 'leadership'. School is an import mechanism for the transformation of man and the society. School has different connotational meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Agabi (2005 p. 93) sees school "as an institution primarily established and used for the education of children and young person's". This definition implies that school is a place where people receive formal training so as

to be transformed for a useful living in the society. Okeke (2004) defines school as "age specific, teacher – related process requiring full time attendance at an obligatory curriculum". The definition viewed school as a conscious, deliberate and formal institution established to educate people through a planned curriculum designed to liberate and improve the standard and condition of living of the people.

Okeke (2004) contends that:

*School is a complex social organization essentially characterized by formal structures and fabric of roles occupied by individuals. It is a bureaucracy with organizational structures that possess positions created on functional basis for people with high level of expertise and technical competence.(P. 5)*

This has really summarized all that has been discussed about school. It shows that school has the following basic pre-occupations: Formal organization, Structured (hierarchically), Made up of people, Bureaucratic in nature, Aim to achieve goal, Has set of coordinated effectiveness.

In agreement with the above, Okorie (2012) pointed out that a formal organization which the school is not an exception is characterized with people, authority and leadership, set of goals etc. It is therefore, imperative that for the school to achieve its goal as a formal organization the role of leadership will not be taken for granted. This accounts for why the school organization cannot be separated from leadership. The big question is then, what is leadership?

Leadership is a process whereby the actions of others are influenced so that they work willingly toward the achievement of institutional or organizational goal. (Bello, Ibi & Bukar,

2016). This implies that school leadership is a collaborative activity. Both the head (leader) and the followers must work willingly and maximally so as to attain the set goals of the school. It involves the process of getting things done with the willing cooperation of the followers. Leadership is therefore a vital tool in the initiation and implementation of school policies. The manner and approach the leader uses to accomplish his administrative task constitute his style.

Leadership style is therefore the strategic approaches the leader uses in providing direction in the implementation of his school plan and policies. Wilson (2016) identified secondary school administrative functions as an enormous task. This is because educational resources are scarce. He therefore advocated for effective leadership style by school administrators (Principals) in order to cope with this situation. Democratic leadership style is a form of participatory governance where people are free to take part in decision that will affect them. The leader and the people determine all policies, the technique, and procedure of doing things. Democratic process allows for decentralized system of communication. Feedback and fairness is one of the fundamental factors in democracy. The school leader under a democratic setting allows for a participatory form of administration. There is congruence between the school head and teachers behaviours. The reason being that both teacher-teacher and principal teacher relationship is open. Policies and decision making are jointly determined by the teachers and the school leader.

This also allows for joint goal setting and execution. Supporting this assertion Ogunyinka and Adedeoyin (2013) contend that in a school where democratic leadership style is adopted, there will be co-operation, mutual

understanding, free flow of information and team work. Enhancement of Principal-teacher leads to administrative effectiveness of the school as well as better administrative performance. Collaborating with the view of the above scholars, Lamb (2013) argues that any leader who adopts a democratic style of leadership is determined to involve his subordinate in decision making and other activities of the school. He further states that such will enjoy the benefit of improved staff participation, commitment and increased collaboration that will lead to the enhancement of better administrative performance of the organization.

He opines that any secondary school principal that collaborates with his teachers and students in decision making will harvest a better quality decision and greater successful administration. This implies that a democratic leader listens and shares with his subordinate. The practice of democratic leadership enhances information sharing thereby bridging the gap between the staff and the principal. This leads to better decision making in the school system (Mba, 2004). Egbo and Okeke (2009) state the following as advantages of a democratic leadership styles:

1. It enhances cordiality among members.
2. Better decisions are sometimes arrived at as two good heads are better than one.
3. It encourages delegation of duties to its members.
4. It gives the group members sense of belonging and therefore spur them to handwork.

An autocratic leader determines and executes all the activities of the organization. An example of the autocratic leadership in a secondary school institution would be a school principal who maintains

a close school climate, single handedly determines all the policies, dictates all technique and procedure of doing things in the school. According to Okorie (2012) such a leader maintains a one way communication system that does not allow for feedback. He engages in constant supervision of students and his staff. He hardly calls for staff meeting to discuss vital issues affecting the school.

In the secondary school system, the principal is seen as the chief supervisor under an autocratic setting of leadership, the teachers are regarded as instruments that should be closely supervised to ensure that they mechanically execute the methods of procedures determined by the administrator. This method of supervision develops fear and distrust of supervisors as it imposes methods and technique of teaching. Adams (2016) argues that this method of supervision lacks room for initiatives and disallows co-operation between teachers and administrators. Hence it does not enhance administrative and general performance of schools.

The study therefore anchored on principals' leadership style and its relationship on administrative performance of secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, it investigated how the use of principals' different styles of leadership like democratic, autocratic relate to administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent times, there has been a public outcry on the issue of performance in secondary schools in Rivers State. Majority of educational stockholders in the State have expressed dissatisfaction over the lip service and non-satisfactory performance of the school administrators (principals) with regards to the execution and implementation of school policies in the area of maintenance of school

facilities, effective school programme management (curriculum), effective student personal services such as selection, orientation, placement, guidance and counseling, management of school business finance, staff personnel management and maintenance of effective interrelationship with the school community and external agencies.

This may be attributed to the type of leadership style adopted by the principals of these schools. With the kind of heterogeneous leadership styles prevalence among secondary schools in Nigeria, the researcher is bothered whether differential leadership styles hinder or enhance administrative performance of secondary schools.

With regard to public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, the researcher was curious whether principals' democratic and autocratic leadership styles influence the administrative performance of secondary schools in Rivers State, hence the problem of this study.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study was to investigate principals' leadership styles and the administrative performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the relationship between democratic leadership style of principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Investigate the relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the relationship between democratic leadership style of

principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State?

2. What is the relationship between principals autocratic leadership style and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between democratic leadership style of principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State.

### Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of this study consisted of all the 258 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with (eight thousand four hundred and fifty-two) 8,452 teachers. This includes 4,413 male staff and 4,039 female in rural and urban areas.

The sample for this study consisted of five hundred and eighty eight (588) teachers 306 male and 282 female from 40 schools spread across twelve (12) Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for drawing the sample. First 50% of local government Area was randomly sampled giving 12 local Government Area which was distributed proportionately across the 3 senatorial zones in Rivers State. Secondly, 25% of schools in each of the sampled local Government Area was randomly sampled, giving 40 schools.

Lastly 30% of male and 25% of female teachers in each of the sample schools were drawn giving 306 male and 282 female, totaling 588. This number represents 7% of the population. This sample size is appropriate as it is much more greater than the estimated minimum sample size according to Taro Yammen's Formula for sample size (Baridam, 1999, in Ukwuije, 2003, p. 137).

The instruments used for data collection were self-designed questionnaires titled, "Principals' Democratic and Autocratic Leadership Styles Questionnaire (PDALSQ) and Administrative Performance Questionnaire (APQ)". The PDALSQ and APQ were validated and reliability index of 0.87 and 0.851 were established using Cronbach alpha. Pearson Product Moment was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level using 2 ration.

### Results

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between democratic leadership style of principals and their administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between democratic leadership style and administrative performance in Rivers State.**

Teachers	N	r	Decision
Democratic leadership style	588	0.667	Positive high Relationship
Administrative performance			

Table 1 revealed that the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between democratic leadership style and administrative performance of administrators was calculated to be 0.667. The result showed that there is a high positive relationship between democratic leadership style and

administrative performance as determined by the coefficient of 0.667 in secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that an increase in the independent variable (democratic leadership style) leads to a corresponding increase in the dependent variable (administrative performance).

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance?

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between autocratic leadership style and administrative performance

Teachers	N	r	Decision
Autocratic leadership style	588	0.734	Positive high relationship

#### Administrative performance

Table 2 revealed that the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between autocratic leadership style and administrative performance of administrators was calculated to be 0.734. The result showed that there is a high positive relationship between autocratic leadership style and administrative performance as determined by the coefficient of 0.734 in secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that an increase in the independent variable (autocratic leadership style) leads to a corresponding increase in the dependent variable (administrative performance).

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between democratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

**Table 3:** Pearson product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between democratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

Variables	N	df	r	r <sup>2</sup>	Sig. (2tailed)	Level of Sig.	Decision
Democratic leadership style	588	586	0.667	0.44	0.039	0.05	Reject HO <sub>1</sub>
Administrative performance							

From the result of the data in table 3, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.667$ ) between democratic leadership style of principals and administrative performance is strong and positive. The coefficient of

determination ( $r^2 = 0.44$ ) indicates that 44% of administrative performance can be explained by democratic leadership style of principals. The significant value of 0.039 ( $p < 0.05$ ) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null

hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between democratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

**Table 4:** Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis on the relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

Variables	N	Df	R	r <sup>2</sup>	Sig. (2tailed)	Level of Sig.	Decision
Autocratic leadership style	588	586	0.734	0.54	0.007	0.05	Reject HO <sub>2</sub>
Administrative performance							

From the result of the data in table 4, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.734$ ) between autocratic leadership style of principals and administrative performance is strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.54$ ) indicates that 54% of administrative performance can be explained by autocratic leadership style of principals. The significant value of 0.007 ( $p < 0.05$ ) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State and their administrative performance.

### Discussion of Findings and Implications

The discussion of findings was presented as shown below:

#### Principals' Democratic Leadership Style and Administrative Performance in secondary schools

From table 1 the findings revealed a significant relationship between democratic leadership style and administrative performance. Also, respondents agreed that democratic leadership style always suggests two or

more alternative procedure of doing things in order to permit group choice, gives teacher sense of belongings, delegates duties, allows for information decentralization, allows for feedback in information sharing, allows for community involvement in school administration, considers individual need of the teaching, allows for freedom of expression and allows for joint goal setting.

The finding is in agreement with the findings of Chrish and Abeh (2016) who agreed that managers or leaders with democratic inclination's account for more variance in performance. This implies that under a democratic setting, principal teacher relationship will be enhanced thereby leading to administrative effectiveness of the school.

Nadeem, Ghulam, Naveed, Hashmi and Shaikh (2012), also found that democratic leadership style has a positive impact on teachers job performance and organizational performance. the implication of the above finding is that leaders who adopt a democratic style of leadership is determined to involve his subordinate in decision-making and other activities of the school which will in turn enable him to enjoy the benefit of

improved staff participation, commitment and increased collaboration that will lead to the enhancement of better organization. Cuthbert (2015) also agreed in his empirical findings that under a democratic setting, school teachers were involved in decision-making process and that the school heads encouraged teamwork and allow teachers to design their own lesson plan.

### **Autocratic Leadership and Administrative Performance in Secondary Schools**

The result of data analysis on table 2 revealed a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and administrative performance. Also, respondents agreed that autocratic leadership style does not allow individual initiatives, this style is domineering, determines policies and procedure with little or no group participation, allows for little or no communication flow between him and subordinates, dictates all techniques of doing things, dictates the particular work task, always personal in his praise and criticism of the work of each member, stresses importance of hierarchical structure and emphasizes on self-interest with no or little emphasis on group goals.

Okorie (2012) identified the following as some of the basic preoccupations of autocratic leadership; the leader determines all the policies of the organization, dictates all the techniques, procedure and activities of the organization, sometimes tends to be personal in his praise and criticism of the work of his subordinate and stands aloof from active group participation except when he is demonstrating. Okorie (2012) further added that such leader maintains a one way communication system that does not allow for feedback. He engages in constant supervision of students and his

staff. He hardly calls for staff meeting to discuss vital issues affecting the school. The above assertion is in line with the present study and agrees with the findings. Igbal and Tatlah (2012) conducted an empirical research study on leadership styles and school effectiveness. Their findings revealed that the significant factor responsible for effecting the achievement of the school is the degree to which head teachers are participative and adopt the selling leadership style. This implies that autocratic leadership is dictatorial system of administration. This is because under this setting the leader single-handedly determines all the policies and procedure of events and activities in the school with the achievement of set results.

### **Conclusion**

From the finding of this study, the researcher concluded that principals' leadership styles such as democratic and autocratic have significant positive relationship with administrative performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations based on the findings.

1. School principals should adopt the use of democratic, autocratic, transactional and transformational leadership styles as they have significant relationship with administrative performance in secondary schools.
2. Principals should desist from the use of laissez-faire leadership as it does not add value to their administrative performance.



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