

Comparative study of leadership styles in public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 era in ido local government area, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study compared the leadership styles of principals dominating in both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 era in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 26 public secondary schools and 97 registered private secondary schools. The total population of teachers in the study was 1194. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 306 respondents was sampled of which questionnaires were administered and 305 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. A self-designed questionnaire that yielded reliability coefficients of $r= 0.942, 0.911, 0.924$ were used for data collection. A research question and two hypotheses were used to guide the study. The findings of the study showed a significant difference in the leadership style adopted by school principals of both school types with mean =92.5 and 1149, $SD= 9.712$ and 11.634 , while ($t = 0.719$; $df= 301$, $p < 0.05$). There is also a significant gender difference in the leadership style adopted by principals of both schools with mean =125.14 and 120.97, $SD= 14.195$ and 9.318 and ($t= 2.909$; $df= 301$; $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that principals in schools have been proactive to overcome all the challenges facing education in the COVID-19 Era. Therefore, it is recommended that; principals in public secondary schools be transformational and digital in the COVID-19 Era.

Keywords: leadership, leadership styles, public school, private school, principal.

1 INTRODUCTION

The reality of the post-Covid-19 pandemic and the new normal indicates that the Nigerian educational sector needs creative leaders who can change their way and styles of leadership, adjusting to any prevailing circumstances and still be able to achieve the educational goal. Alam, (2017) asserts that leadership is more than displaying authority and being recognized by others as having power. It is about breaking down barriers and leading others through the uncertainty of the future. It is equipping others with

the right tools and strategies to maximize the success of their organization and maximize people's lives as individuals. Thus, leadership could be defined as service to humanity. All these have direct application to the educational system. Leadership in school settings is largely vested in the school principals who play a crucial and imperative role as leaders in such a context. School principals, through their leadership, serve as a link initiating positive reforms, ensuring effective learning and educational goals, towards realising national objectives. Ken. (2018) views leadership in education as doing all necessary things to support both students and teachers, ensuring teachers have all they need to do their job well. As posited by Ward (2020), effective leadership is anchored on ideas (whether original or borrowed). He adds that it requires communicating such ideas to others to engage them enough to act as the leader wants them to act. In other words, the leader inspires and directs the action. In essence, leadership entails possessing the necessary leadership skills and personality that make followers want to follow a leader's direction.

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has brought so many changes to the educational sector as well as the ways of living in general. These range from having to deal with economic issues due to the world economic meltdown to the social and emotional devastation of both teachers and students. More particularly, the pandemic has brought about a rapid shift away from the traditional teaching and learning method with physical interactions to a digital way of learning like blending, integrated learning solutions, personalized learning, and nano learning. School leaders need to find their way around this new method of teaching and learning or may face the danger of soon going into extinction. The new normal brought by the pandemic requires a leader that can navigate through this period making wise use of the different leadership styles as situations demand. Private schools seem to have fared better in this regard than public schools. While public schools solely depend on learning through the television without the active response of learners being taught, their counterpart private schools make use of other learning methods like blending, collaboration, video conferencing, and personalized learning to mention but a few, which is done through Google Meet and Zoom. In other words, learning in the private schools was diversified and it also involved the learners themselves.

However, there is an urgent need for the government, stakeholders, private bodies, religious bodies, and parents to look into the school curriculum and make it functional. The school curriculum should focus more on problem-solving and the development of talents and giftings of the students. It should be about what the individual students naturally had an interest in. This also has become the way and pattern some private schools are now operating, developing and building on the gifting and talent of their learners. An effective leader in this era will use all the resources within its reach to realise the purpose of schooling thereby properly engaging the students and helping to make proper use of their God-given gifts and talent.

The procedure or manner in which a leader (the school principal) leads is termed leadership style. This includes his personality, the way he or she relates with his followers, the need for the work in question, and the organizational culture in which the school operates. Such styles may include autocratic, visionary, pacesetter, democratic, coaching, servant, laissez-faire, transactional, transformational, bureaucratic, and digital.

The autocratic style of leadership is one in which the leader believes he or she knows it all and does not need any input, suggestions, or contributions from other members of the team. An autocratic leader focuses on results and efficiency, and it is commonly described as the "Do as I say" leadership (Kruse, 2019). Leadership here is more of a command-and-control approach, and cannot survive in today's world and talent. This type of leadership creates a climate of fear with little or no room for dialogue. Nevertheless, this leadership style can still be appropriate in certain structures where crucial and quick decisions had to be made on the spot and about the situation, or where the leader is dealing with new team members and had no time to wait for them to gain familiarity with their role.

The visionary style of leadership requires leaders to lead the way and set expectations while engaging and energizing followers to follow after. The phrase commonly indicative of this leadership style is "Follow me". A visionary leader is a confident leader who 'lifts the flag' for people in a climate of uncertainty (Kruse, 2019). He helps employees see where the organisation is going and what will happen when they get there. Unlike autocratic leaders, visionary leaders take time to explain their thoughts. They do not just give orders but allow their employees to make contributions on how to achieve the common goal of the organization. This type of leadership style is helpful for small, fast-growing organizations or larger organizations that are experiencing corporate restructuring.

The pace-setting leadership style describes a leader who sets a high standard. The phrase most commonly used by the leader is 'Do as I do' (Kruse, 2019). This leader raises the bar high and encourages their team members to work hard and fast to finish the goal. While this leadership style is effective in getting work done and is result-oriented, it can also harm team members in the sense that members may become stressed, working under this style of leadership in the long run. Though this leadership style is highly motivational and helpful in a fast-paced environment where team members need motivation, it is not always the best option for members who need mentorship and feedback.

The democratic style of leadership gives power to the people in a setting or institution full of competent employees. They make room for change and adaptation, rely on input from their team, and also consider feedback. Democratic leaders are often people-oriented and ensure everyone takes ownership for decision-making and success. They promote team spirit and cooperation from employees and engender trust. This leadership style also creates room for creativity and helps employees grow and develop their skills and ability. Since this leadership style fosters participation and is discussion-driven, it can be an

excellent style for an organization that is focused on creativity and innovation such as the educational and technological industry.

The coaching style of leadership views people as a well of talent that needs to be developed (Kruse, 2019). Thus, the leader who coaches seeks to unlock peoples 'hidden abilities and potential. They believe everyone has something to offer and open up their hearts and doors for people. Also, they direct and help people discover and tap into their abilities to achieve all that they are capable of. Coach leadership style is one of the most advantageous for employers and employees alike. However, it is often under-initiated because it is more time-intensive as compared to other types of leadership. If adopted by any organization, it stands the test of time.

The servant style of leadership believes in serving people and putting them first (Robert, 2021). They do this by adding value and enriching the lives of their employees. A servant leader first assumes the position of a servant thereby putting themselves in the shoes of their employees and going the extra mile to create a caring and lovely environment where everyone feels free to express themselves and contribute their best toward the growth of the organization in which they belong. Also, this leadership style aspires to grow and focus on the well-being of their employees. The phrase servant leadership was first used by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 (Robert, 2021).

The laissez-faire style of leadership is the opposite of the autocratic style. This style focuses more on delegating many tasks to team members with little or no supervision. Laissez-faire leaders often have more time for their projects than spend time managing their employees. This type of leadership can be adopted by managers whose employees are highly experienced, well trained, and require little or no supervision. However, this may reduce the level of productivity if subordinates are confused about the leader's expectations or if some team members need some level of supervision and motivation as well as boundaries to work well which seems not to be there.

The transactional style of leadership, according to Daskal (2016) requires leaders to offer an exchange by rewarding good performances while punishing bad practice, this leadership style focuses on group organization, establishing a clear chain of command and responsibility for each employee. They also use incentive programs to motivate workers. This type of leadership is good for organizations with high specific goals such as sales and revenue, but it is not the best for driving creativity.

Also, Daskal (2016) opines that the transformational style of leadership motivates team members with a shared vision of the future, and also communicates well. These leaders are proactive, adjust easily, self-aware, empathetic, authentic, and humble. They inspire their team members to expect the very best from them. They are held accountable for their actions, set clear goals, and have good conflict resolution skills which lead to high productivity and engagement. They are also able to change and adapt to other styles of leading as the situation demands.

The bureaucratic leadership style focuses on fixed rules and duties within a hierarchy where each employee has a set list of responsibilities, and there is little need for collaboration, innovation and creativity. Leaders here lead by following established rules, making sure the organization structure is being followed religiously. More so, a bureaucratic leader is well organized, consistent, detail-oriented and task-focused, often dealing with routine jobs. This form of leadership style is most effective in highly regulated industries or departments, such as finance, healthcare and government establishment (Mooney, 2018). The bureaucratic style of leadership engages in a highly official set of processes, procedures and structures. This sometimes creates a bottleneck and delays in the implementation of activities within the organisation.

The digital style of leadership is an advanced form of transformational leadership. It uses technology including digital devices, services, and resources to advance communication, organize work and lives, and create new ways of doing old things well. Digital leaders understand technology as much as they understand money (Hordos, 2018). They are curious about their work, always looking for the best and new way to get the organizational task accomplished; they also encourage their team members to do the same. They are often open to learning, understand the need of the time, and work towards it. Hordos (2018) avers that digital leader makes their work appealing, relevant, fundable, accessible, and cheap to develop and deliver.

All the aforementioned leadership styles can be influenced by many factors such as personality traits, belief systems, organizational culture, employee diversity, financial security, and technological skills. The way the leaders handle what life throws at them affects their conduct and roles (Hordos, 2018), and aligning the leaders' basic nature with a particular method of leadership is most often successful. This is because the leader will be comfortable being with himself or herself. If the leader possesses a charming personality that draws people to him or her, he will likely adopt a transformational style that develops faithful staff wanting to please their leader. On the other hand, a person or leader that is most comfortable with following set roles and protocol is likely to adopt the autocratic style in which employees are trained to carry out their duty's instinct according to the stated rules and regulations. Personality traits influencing leaders are upbringing, education, self-worth, religious view, gender, introversion, extroversion, and circumstances of life. Hordos (2018) further opines that the belief system or professional ethics of a leader can also influence his method of leadership. When a leader believes strongly in teamwork as the most successful approach to work, he or she will adopt the democratic style in his leadership. Organization Culture or the nature of school culture can influence a leader's leadership style. If a culture of well-trained and motivated employees exists in a school, the leader may likely adopt the Laissez-faire style, where the leader believes his or her employees are capable of handling their work without much supervision. Hordos (2018) states that some organizations see creativity as a significant factor in their organizational success.

This culture requires a creative leader who will motivate and spur his employees to be creative and innovative in their way of thinking to express their opinions and experiment with different work methods. This is a typical coaching leadership style.

Employee diversity also implies the adoption of an appropriate leadership style. Leaders must be diverse in their approach to dealing with their staff or employees as they are most likely to employ people of different cultures, races, genders, and ages Mooney (2018). The style of leadership most suitable for a diverse set of employees is the participating or democratic style in which leaders work closely with employees to help them succeed. Servant leadership is another successful style that works best for employees of different backgrounds. Here, the leader dedicates his efforts to meeting the employee needs so that they can mature as workers and pass along this same servant attitude to other employees and their students.

Financial Security is another factor that can influence a leaders' style of leading. Employers who offer competitive paychecks to their employees from the beginning have set the employees motivated. A leader that is well motivated as a result of good pay which brings about financial security will be willing to adopt all best practices in leadership styles to ensure that the organization is set on a pedestrian path of success. This implies that, when a leader does not have financial stress he or she knows that his or her needs are met, will be willing to give all that it takes to ensure that the organizational goals and objectives are achieved in any way suitable to his or her leadership style. On the other hand, a leader with financial insecurity will be psychologically unfit to execute educational goals and objectives. This is because there is an underlined burden and pressure that becloud his mind, thus will not be able to lead effectively irrespective of the leadership style he adopts. It has been observed that most public-school leaders are not always found at their duty post as they pursue other sources of financial security at the expense of the discharge of their duty. And this has eroded the performance of the leaders and students.

The technology skills of a leader may influence a leaders' style of leading in speed, accuracy, and in getting the work done effectively. The 21st-century schools demand higher-order learning skills for students and teachers alike and school leaders (principals) are expected to facilitate these changes (Suarez, 2012). Leaders that are very proficient in the use of technology will also produce proficient teachers and students which in turn will lead to high productivity and high academic performance. Top-performing leaders understand and make use of technology to automate repetitive tasks, fast-track their work, and raise expectations. Furthermore, the role of educational leaders in this 21st century has changed because many companies have transformed their educational system and schools to better prepare learners for today's world of economic globalization and increase the mobility of people. The technological skills of 21st-century leaders, therefore, cannot be overemphasized because it makes room for innovation, increases problem-solving skills, increases productivity and efficiency.

A leader's gender at times may also influence his or her leadership role. Gender could be defined as the role a male or a female plays in society. It is not the same as sex. Sex, therefore, is the biological difference between male and female. Sometimes, a person genetically assigned sex or being a male or a female does not correspond with their gender identity. Thus, these individuals may refer themselves to be transgender or non-binary. In Africa, a patriarchal society exists, where men are assumed to be favourably fit in matters of leadership and decision making. While women tend to be marginalized in every area of leadership. Gender difference is a global phenomenon that cuts across culture, behaviour, beliefs, socialization, and upbringing. Recent studies and research have shown that female leaders (principals) are more task and people-oriented than their male counterparts.

It has been observed from existing studies that there are no better leadership styles than the other. The fact remains that leadership styles have their place in a leader's way of leading the people. A wise and effective leader knows how to switch from one style of leadership to another as the situation demands. Thus, leadership styles are a continuum. Hassan's (2018) study shows the impact of leadership styles on organizational performance that organizational performance is associated with leadership styles having both negative and positive impact on performance. The success of any organization, therefore, depends on its leadership as they are the force that initiates the action in people. This study compared the various leadership styles in Public and Private secondary schools in Ido local government area during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been generally observed over the years that the success of any organizational system, be it public or private depends largely on the leadership. Many organizations had gone into extinction due to the operation of a poor leadership style in place. The current problem the world is facing (COVID-19 pandemic), has left most developing countries like Nigeria in a state that may be difficult to recover from shortly, especially, in the area of education if some drastic measures are not put in place. However, in the COVID-19 Era, there seems to be a paradigm shift in that schools not led by a digital/transformational leader may likely be on the verge of losing pupils/students while those that are technologically inclined may be gaining more grounds and be more effective. Some research work has been done to compare the leadership styles of principals in Onitsha and the effect it had on the effectiveness of teachers and students' academic excellence. Also, much has been said on how principals' behaviour, administrative skills, and work environment among others, affect the leadership roles. However, the leadership styles of school principals of both public and private secondary schools in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State have not been researched at all. In this regard, this study will compare the leadership styles of school

principals of both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo state.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

What type of leadership styles dominate in both Public and Private Secondary Schools in the COVID -19 Era in the Ido Local Government area of Ibadan, Oyo State?

1.3 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance

- 1) There will be no significant difference in leadership styles dominating in both Public and Private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido Local Government area of Ibadan, Oyo State.
- 2) There will be no significant gender difference in the leadership style adopted by principals of both Public and Private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era.

2 METHODOLOGY

The research design was a descriptive design of survey type. The population of the study consists of (26) Public and (97) registered private secondary schools in Ido local government area. The population of teachers in public schools was 244 while that of private schools was 970, summing up to 1194 teachers in both schools. The sampling technique used for sample selection is the Taro Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level. A sample size of at least 300 respondents was selected.

The research instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: A, B, C. The instrument was given face and content validation. A pilot study was carried out to validate the instrument and the reliability of the instrument gave a coefficient value of $r=0.943, 0.911, 0.923$ for all three sections respectively. Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, and graph for biodata, while frequency, mean scores, weighted means, standard deviation, and percentage were used in analysing the research question and a t-test was also used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

3 RESULTS

Research question: What type of leadership styles dominate in both Public and Private Secondary Schools in the COVID -19 Era in the Ido local government area of Ibadan, Oyo State?

Table 1: Prevalent Leadership Style in Public and Private Secondary Schools in COVID-19 Era in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State

Leadership Styles	Public School	Private School
Coaching	7 (9.7%)	13(5.6%)
Visionary	4 (5.6%)	11(4.7%)
Servant	2(2.8%)	5(2.2%)
Autocratic	6(8.3%)	26(11.2%)
Laissez-faire	5(6.9%)	9(3.9%)
Democratic	21(29.3%)	14(6.0%)
Pace setting	5(6.9%)	19(8.2%)
Transformational	7(9.7%)	69(29.6%)
Transactional	5(6.9%)	16(6.8%)
Bureaucratic	8(11.1%)	30(12.8%)
Digital	2(2.8%)	21(9.0%)
Total	72(100%)	233(100%)

Table 1 presents the prevalent leadership style in public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido local government area of Oyo State. It was revealed that in public secondary schools, democratic leadership style was the prevalent style among school principals with 29.3% while in private secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Oyo state, a transformational style emerged as the prevalent leadership style among school principals with 29.6%.

3.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING

H01: There will be no significant difference in leadership styles dominating in both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido local government area of Oyo State.

Table 2: Summary of T-Test Table Showing Difference in Leadership Styles Dominating in Both Public and Private Secondary Schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig	Remarks
School Type: Public	72	92.51	9.712	0.71	301	0.034	Sig.
Private	233	119.49	11.634				
Leadership Styles	305	121.34	12.217				

Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 shows the t-test table of analysis of hypothesis one formulated on the difference in leadership styles dominating in both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 era in the Ido local government area of Oyo State. The table revealed that there is a significant difference in leadership styles dominating in public and private secondary schools ($t = 0.719$; $df = 301$; $P < 0.05$), then, the hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference in leadership styles dominating public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido local government area of Oyo State. The leadership styles dominating in private secondary schools are higher than in public secondary schools, this is revealed in the mean values: public (92.51), private (119.49). The

standard deviations of public and private secondary schools were given as 9.712 and 11.634, respectively. The mean value for leadership style was given as 121.34 while the standard deviation was 12.217.

H₀₂: There will be no significant gender difference in the leadership styles adopted by principals of both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido local government area of Oyo State.

Table 3: Summary of T-Test Table Showing Gender Difference in Leadership Styles adopted by Principals of both Public and Private Secondary Schools in the COVID-19 Era.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig	Remark
Gender: Male	137	125.14	14.195				
Female	168	120.97	9.318				
Principals' Leadership Styles	305	122.84	12.394	2.909	301	0.014	Sig.

Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Results of hypothesis two formulated on the gender difference in the leadership styles adopted by principals of both public and private secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Oyo State are presented in table 3. The table revealed that there is a significant difference in leadership styles adopted by principals of both public and private secondary schools ($t = 2.909$; $df = 301$; $P < 0.05$), then, the hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant gender difference in principals' leadership styles of both public and private secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Oyo State. Leadership styles adopted by male principals are more effective than that of female principals, this is revealed in the mean values of males and females which are given as 125.14 and 120.97, respectively. The standard deviation of male and female principals was 14.195 and 9.318, respectively. The mean value for principal leadership styles was given as 122.84 while the standard deviation was 12.394.

4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

For the research question, analysis of the study conducted revealed that the leadership style dominating in Public Secondary Schools is the democratic style while that of the Private Secondary schools is the Transformational style. This result corroborates Hassan, (2018) study which showed that democratic and transformational leadership styles are commonly used styles in both public and private secondary schools in Nigeria. Moreso, the study on progressive education and development also agreed with the assertion (Ogbiji, 2018). This, therefore, follows those principals of private secondary schools in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan innovative, more creative, proactive to change, inspire team members, and achieve higher performance. Also, principals in private secondary schools place value on

employees and their work. It is not surprising that the private secondary schools were able to adapt and strive during the lockdown, ensuring that teaching and learning activities are not much affected and students are continuously engaged all through the period of the lockdown. Meanwhile, teaching and learning activities in the public secondary schools were greatly affected by the lockdown.

For hypothesis one, the analysis conducted revealed that there were significant differences in leadership styles dominating in both public and private secondary schools in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State. This is shown in table 4.7 with 21 respondents out of 72 from public schools choosing the democratic style of leadership at 29.3% which is the highest percentage for public schools. Also, the same table result shows that 69 out of 233 respondents voted for transformational style in private secondary schools at 29.6% which is the highest percentage for private schools. This result agrees with the study on comparative analysis of administrative leadership styles of principals in public and private schools in Oriade local government area, Osun State which indicates a significant difference in the leadership style of principals of both public and private secondary schools (Onongha, 2018). However, this result does not agree with the H_1 raised. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected at a 0.05 level of significance and the alternative is accepted.

For hypothesis two, the result of the analysis clearly shows a significant gender difference in leadership styles adopted by both male and female principals of both Public and Private Secondary Schools. From the table, the number of male principals was 137, with a mean value of 125.14 and a standard deviation of 14.195. While the number of female principals was 168, with a mean value of 120.97 and a standard deviation of 9.318. This indicates that the male principals are more effective and more preferred than the female principals. This result corroborates the works of Onongha, (2018); Al-Tangeiji & Ibrahim, (2003) and Numkanisorm, (2004).

5 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that the leadership styles adopted by principals of both public and private secondary schools in the COVID-19 Era in the Ido local government area of Ibadan, Oyo State differs. However, despite their differences in leadership styles, both school principals tend to share the bureaucratic leadership style in common. Nevertheless, the principals in private secondary schools are more digital inclined than the principals in public secondary schools. To be effective and efficient in the COVID-19 Era, then both school-typed principals have to be transformational and digital incline as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that:

- i. principals in public secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Ibadan, Oyo State have to be transformational in this period of the COVID-19 Era.
- ii. principals of both public and private secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Ibadan, Oyo State should adopt the digital leadership style that best fits the COVID-19 Era.
- iii. the principals in public secondary schools in the Ido local government area of Ibadan, Oyo State need to learn, unlearn and relearn to stay current and get ahead in the COVID-19 Era.

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