

Lagos Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education
ISSN: 3043-9075 E-ISSN: 3043-6834
Volume 2, Issue 2, July 2024, 397-413
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36349/lajocse.2024.v02i02.31>
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PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

¹Dr. H.O. Alonge & ²Mr. Progress Odjugo

¹hezekiah.alonge@uniben.edu

²Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education, University of Benin
Benin City

progress.odjugo@uniben.edu 08032741137

Abstract

The paper examined the leadership styles of Edo State principals and the relationships between schools and the community. Four research questions were posed in order to direct the investigation. While research questions 2 through 4 were hypothesised and tested using Fisher's z and Pearson r statistics at the 0.05 alpha level, research question 1 was directly addressed. This research used a correctional design and was a survey. The study's participants included of 136 principals of public secondary schools located in Edo State. To choose the sample size, a multi-stage approach was used. The study used a questionnaire with three components, A, B, and C, called the "Principals' Leadership Styles and School Community Relations Questionnaire (PLSSCRQ)." Frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations, rankings, Pearson's r, and Fisher's Z statistics were all used in the analyses. The results showed that the majority leadership style used by Edo State's public secondary school principals is democratic leadership. In Edo State, the degree of school-community interactions is moderate. Based on the principals' age, gender, experience, and qualifications, the results also showed a substantial correlation between the authoritarian leadership style and school community relations. School administrators should keep encouraging an inclusive and participatory atmosphere where all stakeholders have a voice and are active in defining the school's policies, procedures, and activities, among other recommendations based on the findings. In order to foster collaboration and support, principals ought to cultivate and encourage community partnerships with nearby organisations and leaders.

Keywords: *Principals; Leadership Styles, School-Community Relations.*

Introduction

A school-community connection is a set of planned events and media that the school uses to find out more about the community, educate it about its goals, problems, and programmes, and assess its progress and policies (Bortner, 2019). Between the community and the school, there is a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and support as well as complete transparency regarding each other's plans, programmes, policies, issues, successes, and setbacks (Afolabi, 1998). According to Bertner (2019), the school-community interaction comprises many activities and media that facilitate the school's understanding of the community and involve the community in the creation and implementation of school policies, plans, and programmes. The community and the school have the biggest and most enduring effects on a child's development out of all the educational institutions. The school is a social institution created by the community to shape children's beliefs, routines, and attitudes in order to develop well-rounded individuals who would benefit both themselves and society as a whole (O' Hanlon & Clifton, 2004).

The immediate learning environment of a child, which is not his home or school, is referred to as his community. According to O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004), a child's learning experiences at home or in school are shaped by the needs, values, expectations, and goals of the surrounding community. In order for the school to provide the kid with the necessary intellectual, social, civic, and vocational abilities to become a valuable adult, community members must actively engage in the educational process.

Daresh (2002) asserts that the school serves as a microcosm of the neighbourhood where it is situated. The pupils were community members as well. While the community generally regards staff personnel with great regard. It is important for school administrators, who are frequently seen as their institutions' public relations officers, to work tirelessly towards fostering the school-community relationship because the school and the community are inextricably linked (Daresh, 2002). In order to make sure that school activities as closely as possible represent the nature and goals of the community, school administrators should make an effort to become acquainted with the makeup and character of the school community.

According to Zhang (2005), in educational institutions where there is a tense relationship between the community and the school, the administrators are either removed or the tense relationship is

reconciled through a series of meetings between the administrators and the community leaders. Therefore, an effective school administrator needs to understand that in order to thrive in the educational system, he needs to look for the community's support.

There is no school in a vacuum. The school is a part of the community and was founded solely to help the community achieve its goals. The school community plays a vital role in the efficient operation of the educational system, which has forced school administrators to work towards strengthening the bonds between their institutions and the areas in which they are situated. Among these noteworthy contributions, according to Labadia (2010: 34), are to:

find out what the school community is like; look into how the community views the roles of the administrators and teachers; learn about the goals, values, and objectives of the school community; Effective communication of critical information about the school to the community is facilitated by school-community relationships. shield the school administration from neighbourhood politics and community involvement; and cultivate the bond between the school and the community by establishing volunteer organisations like the parent-teacher association, alumni association, philanthropic organisations, and religious organisations.

Every individual inside an organisation or institution regards the leadership styles as a fundamental and important problem. A leader's style is the specific behaviour they use to inspire followers to accomplish the goals of the company. Okumbe (2012). A leader's style is a synthesis of several actions, characteristics, and attributes that they employ to communicate with their followers (Mitonga-Monga & Coetzee, 2012). Therefore, a leader's style is determined by how they carry out directives, carry out plans, and inspire their team members. Any organization's work quality is influenced by its leadership style; dynamic leadership behaviour produces excellent work outcomes, whereas poor leadership behaviour produces negative work outcomes.

Throughout human history, the term "leadership" has been employed in a variety of contexts, including politics, business, academia, and social work. According to Messick and Kramer (2014), a person's ability to demonstrate leadership qualities depends not only on his own qualities and attributes but also on the circumstances and surroundings in which he finds himself. It takes a lot of care and complexity for a leader to cultivate a supportive culture (Iyanuoluwa & Iyanuoluwa, 2019). School principals need to be proficient in data management, communication, conflict resolution, group process facilitation, and inquiry, according to Sackney and Walker (2016). Principals serve as both institutional leaders and managers. They are primarily in charge of

carrying out the secondary education goals and objectives of the country as outlined in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013).

The principal serves as the school's top organiser, planner, coordinator, controller, and accountant. In addition to supporting teachers in carrying out their professional responsibilities, the principal is expected to provide professional leadership in the creation of school programmes. Leading, guiding, conducting, directing, and inspiring the teaching and non-teaching staff to achieve the school's goals and objectives is the principal's responsibility. The success of a school greatly depends on the principal, who must have the fundamental administrative and leadership abilities as well as the experience to effectively manage the resources—cash, supplies, and labor—as well as the staff members—teaching and non-teaching—at his or her disposal to achieve the intended results in education (Evers, Ruch & Berdrorius, 2008). Keeping up school-community relations is one of the principal's key duties nowadays in order to achieve goals as best they can.

According to Okorie, Ememe, and Egu (2009), school-community relations refer to the level of mutual understanding and goodwill that exists between the school and the community. It is a two-way symbiotic arrangement through which the school and the community cooperate with each other for the realisation of the goals of the community and vice versa. According to Iyanuoluwa & Iyanuoluwa (2019), schools are open systems and social organisations that live on productive interactions between their host communities and internal members.

The interconnection of the school community is therefore unbreakable. The relationship is reciprocal. The two are mutually dependent and directly affect one another. If the expectation is that schools will succeed in their main goal of preparing students for a meaningful life and survival in a changing society. This suggests that the community's and other pertinent stakeholders' collaboration is essential for the school to continue operating independently. In the current educational system, school leadership must collaborate with the school community in order to manage the myriad of difficulties that schools encounter.

Democratic leadership style involves involving team members in the decision-making process, but ultimately making the final call. According to Ibukun, Oyewole, and Abe (2011), they foster innovation and result in highly engaged team members who make decisions and work on projects. The advantages of democratic leadership are numerous. Because they are more involved, team

members typically have high job satisfaction and are productive. Employee skill development is also aided by this technique. Members of a team are driven by factors other than money because they feel that they are a part of something bigger and more significant (Niguss, 2012). Democratic leadership poses a risk since it can breakdown in circumstances where efficiency or quickness are crucial. For example, in a crisis, a team may squander time getting feedback (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015). Members of the team who lack the skills or experience necessary to offer insightful feedback pose a further risk (Kashagate, 2012).

The primary of this leadership style frequently includes the subordinates in decision-making. This headship, in contrast to autocratic, is focused on the contributions of subordinates. The democratic leader is ultimately in charge, but it is common for them to assign power to others who choose the tasks to be completed. According to Koeh and Amusonge (2013), this leadership style's most distinctive aspect is its active upward and downward communication.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style: According to Goodnight (2011), this style of leadership can be either the best or the worst. Laissez faire, which translates to "let it be" in French, is also referred to as the "hands off style" (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015). Gill (2014) defines it as allowing employees to finish projects and jobs as they see fit, without following tight guidelines or rules. According to Bass (1985), a leader who practices laissez-faire leadership lacks confidence in his own competence to oversee. Laissez faire leadership, according to Mbiti (2007), is a free-reign style in which the leader doesn't lead but instead lets the group figure things out on its own.

According to Niguss (2012), laissez-faire leaders delegate authority and refrain from making choices, allowing their subordinates total autonomy to finish tasks and choose their own due dates. According to Chaudhry and Javed (2012), laissez-faire bosses typically give their subordinates the freedom to decide what has to be done at work. They don't get involved other than to offer teams resources and guidance as needed. If the team leader consistently provides feedback to team members and keeps an eye on performance, this leadership style may work well (Bass, 2014). Laissez-faire leadership's primary benefit is that it can boost productivity and job happiness by giving team members a great deal of autonomy. When team members lack the information, abilities, or drive to complete their work efficiently, it can be detrimental (Niguss, 2012). Insufficient control over employees by managers can also result in this kind of leadership (Ololube, 2013).

A principal who practices laissez-faire leadership tends to delegate control to his staff members. He gives the teaching and non-teaching staff the flexibility to complete their given jobs without direct monitoring, and he thus exerts little to no control over the teachers. Since the principal doesn't seem to have complete authority over the educational system, this kind of leadership could leave open the possibility of internal security concerns (Little, 2013).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that a principal who takes a laissez-faire approach to leadership will be viewed as lacking seriousness. Even while he (the principle) has a relationship with the community, it won't be strong enough for the community to always be there to support him. Due to his lack of presence in this situation, the principle runs the risk of not receiving the whole support of the community.

Statement of the problem

The administrative efficacy of schools is significantly influenced by the school and host communities, as evidenced by research and observation. Nonetheless, observation indicates that there seem to be poor school community ties in the majority of Edo State's schools. Concerned educators and some members of the public frequently saw chilly links between the host communities and the schools. However, the leadership stance taken by principals of schools complements this. The poor state of many school facilities makes it difficult to teach and learn effectively. In addition, community members frequently destroy the few working facilities that are present, such as tables, chairs, and the school building. There had been reports at one point of foreigners stealing and vandalising property. On the other hand, school principals' leadership philosophies had been inconsistent. Allegations have been made against certain principals for their perceived rigidity and authoritarian demeanour. Some administrators feel that they alone should be in charge of running the school; as a result, if their schools ever had PTA bodies, they rarely ever confer with the organization's leadership. What can be causing this kind of situation at the school? Is it because of the leadership style that the principals have chosen to use in the management of the schools? Do secondary schools have relationships with the school community? Therefore, the study's goal is to determine whether principals' leadership styles significantly affect the relationships between schools and the community.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of principals' leadership styles on school – community relations in Edo State.

Specifically the study:

- i. Investigated the common leadership style adopted by principals in Public Secondary Schools in Edo State.
- ii. Investigated if there is a significant relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations in public secondary schools in Edo State.
- iii. Documented whether a difference in relationship exists between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on their age in public secondary schools in Edo State.
- iv. Assessed whether there is a difference in relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on sex of principals in public secondary schools in Edo State.

To guide the study, the following research questions were raised

1. What is the common leadership style adopted by school principals in Public Secondary School in Edo State?
2. Is there a relationship between principals' leadership styles and community relations in Public Secondary School in Edo State?
3. Is there a difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on principals' age in Public Secondary School in Edo State?
4. Is there a difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on principals' sex in Public Secondary School in Edo State?

Hypotheses

Research question 1 was answered directly while 2 to 4 were turned into hypotheses

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on principals' age in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

HO₄: There is no significant difference in the relationship between principal's leadership styles and school community relations based on principals' sex in public secondary school in Edo State.

Methodology

The study used a correlational technique for its survey design. This is due to the fact that the researcher will be able to gather data from a sample of a designated population thanks to the descriptive survey. Since the goal of the study was to ascertain the relationship that exists between principals' leadership styles and school-community relationships, the design was deemed adequate. All Edo State public secondary school principals make up the target population. In this study, 408 instructors from 68 secondary schools made up the sample. A multistage sampling procedure was employed in the selection of research participants. In the first stage, the schools were divided into Edo North Central and South, three geopolitical districts.

In stage 2, a purposeful selection of fifty percent of all secondary schools from all local government area schools results in a total of sixty-eight (68). Six (6) instructors were also chosen at random from the designated secondary schools for Stage 3. A structured questionnaire named the "principals' leadership styles and school community relationship questionnaire (PLSSCRQ)" was used as the data collection tool. The consistency of the research instrument that was used was established using Cronbach's alpha statistics, which helped to guarantee the instruments' dependability. In order to accomplish this, twenty secondary school instructors who were not involved in the study were given questionnaires. The mean, standard deviation, and rank order were used to respond to research question 1. At the 0.05 level of significance, Fisher's Z statistics were used to test hypotheses 2 and 3, whereas Pearson r was used to test hypothesis 1.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4

Research Question one: what is the commonly leadership styles adopted by principals in Edo State?

Table 2: Leadership Styles Adopted by Principals in Edo South Senatorial District

Leadership style variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Autocratic	17.12	3.90	2 nd
Democratic	22.17	5.13	1 st
Laissez-faire	14.39	2.69	3 rd

The data in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles as 17.12 and 3.90, 22.17 and 5.13, and 14.39 and 2.69 respectively. Since the mean of the democratic leadership style is higher than the other two, it can be concluded that the democratic leadership style is the predominant leadership style adopted by the public secondary principals in Edo State.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant relationship between principals leadership style and School community relations in Public Secondary School in Edo State

Table 2: Pearson correlation showing the relationship of leadership styles and School Community relations in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

Variables	N	Pearson r	P-value (sig.)	Remark
Leadership style	408	-018	-011	Significant
Community relations				

Level of significance =0.05, $p < 0.05$

The data in Table 1 reveals a Pearson's r-value of 0.018 with p-value of 0.011. Testing at 0.05 level of significance, the p-value of 0.011 is less than the significant level and as such, it is statistically significant. Also, the Pearson r-value of 0.018 indicates a direct and positive relationship between leadership styles and community relations. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that "there is no significant relationship between leadership styles and school community relations in Edo State is rejected.

Hypotheses 2: there is no significant difference in the relationship between principal's leadership styles and school community relations based on principal's age in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

Table 3: Fisher's Z statistics of principals' leadership style and school community relations based on principals' age.

Variables	N	Pearson r	Fisher's calculated	Z	Fisher's critical	Z	Remark
Young	267	0.525					
Old	141	0.104	2.390		± 1.96		Significant

The data in Table 2 present a Fisher's calculated Z value of 2.390 with a Z critical (table value) of ± 1.96 two tailed. The computed z-value was less than the critical Z-value. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference in the relationship between principals' leadership style and school community relations based on principals' age in Public Secondary School in Edo State" is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the relationship between principal's leadership style and school community relations based on age in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

Hypotheses 3: there is no significant difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations based on principals' gender in Public Secondary School in Edo State.

Table 4: Fisher's Z statistic of principals' leadership style and school community relations based on principals' gender

Variables	N	Pearson r	Fisher's calculated	Z	Fisher's critical	Z	Remark
Male	278	0.206					
Female	130	0.203 a=0.05	2.109		± 1.96		Significant

The data in Table 3 shows Fisher's Z statistical value of 2.109 and a critical Z-value (table value) of ± 1.96 . The computed Z-value was less than the critical Z-value. Hence, the hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations by gender of the principals" is therefore rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school community relations by gender of the principal's.

Discussion of Findings

The study's conclusions demonstrated that Edo State's public secondary school administrators typically use a democratic leadership style. The reason the principals purposefully chose a democratic leadership style is likely that, in a democracy, all stakeholders are involved in the formulation and execution of policies that are necessary for the success of the educational system. Democracies encourage friendly ties between the host community and the school. Because the principal was seen by the community as inclusive and open-minded, they were willing to support his programmes and policies aimed at improving both the school and the community. The results of this study corroborate those of Alam (2012), who advocated for a democratic leadership style and stressed that initiatives succeed when the principal gives teachers assignments, boosts their self-esteem, uses a participatory approach, and assigns tasks only after the teachers are willing to engage in various activities.

This study supports that of Ofeimu, Ahmed, and Kolawole (2018), who found that the principal in the Edo North senatorial district was most successful in controlling pupils' misbehaviour while using a democratic leadership style. This result corroborated Sultan's (2017) findings, which showed that, although this technique varies depending on the situation, both the academic coordinator and the principle generally use democratic leadership to support learning processes in the school.

Regarding the connection between principal leadership styles and ties with the school community, the study found a statistically significant correlation between the two. It is abundantly clear that principals' styles of leadership have a big influence on how the community and schools interact. The community is more likely to support a principal who chooses a democratic leadership style than one who chooses an autocratic one. In a same spirit, it will be challenging for principals who lean towards a laissez-faire leadership style to win over the host community. The host community will distance itself from him because they won't support his policies and programmes for the school

since they perceive him as erratic, illogical, and inconsistent. The community's withdrawal of support for him may be the principals' final obstacle. The study's findings corroborate those of Bass & Riggio (2006), who distinguished three leadership philosophies that school principals employ to handle problems in their institutions. These three types of leadership styles were laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic. He claimed in his study that the school community's members were among the subordinates. Democratic leaders, on the other hand, are more focused on the demands and interests of their subordinates. Conversely, a laissez-faire leadership style encourages the group to gain more influence. A lot of the group's efforts and choices are left up to the leader. The results of the study demonstrated that the age of the principals had a substantial impact on the relationship between their leadership styles and school community relations. A plausible rationale for this phenomenon could be that youthful principals are receptive to novel concepts and eager to engage others in the decision-making process, thereby fostering harmonious relationships with the school communities. As a result, the community broadly supports the young principal's policies and programmes for everyone's benefit, recognising that she is receptive to new ideas and eager to mentor others. This research supports the findings of Harris and Adams (2007), who hypothesised that democratic leaders may also have received more recent training in management and leadership techniques that place an emphasis on shared decision-making and collaboration. These findings are expected to benefit the school community. The study also discovered that younger principals have greater school-community relationships than older principals do across all three leadership styles. The present findings are consistent with those of Harris and Adams (2007), who observed that younger principals tended to have a more democratic leadership style and older administrators were more likely to have an autocratic approach.

The results of the study showed that the association between the leadership styles of principals and school community relations differed significantly based on the principals' gender. Studies have revealed that men principals have a stronger rapport with their host communities than their female counterparts. The research findings additionally demonstrated that the correlation between the leadership styles of principals and school community interactions varies significantly based on the principals' gender. According to this study's findings, male principals have a stronger association than female principals do between their leadership styles and school community interactions. This result is consistent with the research conducted by Hoy and Miskel (2013), who discovered that while other studies have not shown any gender differences in this regard, female principals are

more likely to utilise a democratic leadership style. They also discovered that compared to male principals, female principals were more likely to adopt a democratic leadership style. Democratic leadership entails collaborating with others to accomplish common objectives. Nonetheless, the results of this investigation were at odds with those of Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008). According to their research, there were no appreciable variations in the efficacy or leadership style of male and female principals.

This result implies further that a principal's leadership style or efficacy may not be significantly predicted by their gender. The results regarding the variation in the relationship between a principal's leadership styles and the school community based on the principal's experience showed that the relationship between a principal's leadership styles and the school community based on the principal's sex is significantly different. Male principals could be more assured of their capacity for leadership and more inclined to initiate initiatives to improve links between the school and the community. This might make it easier for them to employ leadership philosophies that call for a certain amount of risk-taking. This result is consistent with the research conducted by Wong & Wong (2011), who suggested that male principals would be more equipped to modify their leadership style to suit the demands of their school community and might have a deeper awareness of the challenges involved in running a school. Furthermore, it's possible that male principals have cultivated close bonds with employees and community members, which is a crucial component of successful leadership. On the other hand, Okoroji, Anyanwu, and Ukpere's (2014) research revealed no distinctions in the effectiveness or leadership style of male and female principals. These findings imply that a principal's leadership style or efficacy may not be significantly influenced by their sexual orientation.

Implication for Educational Administration

Secondary education is important for a nation's socioeconomic and political well-being as well as for the development of the individual youngster. It is actually the kind of education a child gets prior to university education, following primary school. Therefore, if secondary schools are not effectively and efficiently run and controlled by school principals, their goals cannot be fully realised. This raises concerns about the leadership philosophies that school principals have chosen. Thus, it is imperative that principals use the best leadership philosophies to ensure that school objectives are met.

The degree of school-community relations and the leadership philosophies used by school administrators have been found to be correlated. This implies that the school needs to have the ability to include the school community in all of its daily operations in order to ensure an effective teaching and learning process. In order to accomplish this, principals have to choose and demonstrate the right leadership style for the situation at hand. Thus, it is imperative that school principals receive ongoing leadership training so they may understand the impact of their administrative approaches on student achievement and school-community relations.

Conclusion

The study's conclusions led to the conclusion that, in order to run their schools effectively on a daily basis, Edo State principals mostly use a democratic leadership style. Public Secondary School's school-community relations are at a moderate level. However, there is a strong correlation between the quality of school-community interactions and principals who use authoritarian leadership philosophies. Moreover, the leadership philosophies that principals choose to employ during a particular phase of their administration have an impact on school-community ties.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are therefore made

1. School principals should promote an inclusive and participatory environment where all stakeholders have a voice and are involved in shaping the school's policies, practices, and initiatives. This collaborative approach can foster a sense of ownership and commitment, leading to increased motivation and engagement among the school community members.
2. Principals should develop and promote community partnerships with local organizations and community leaders to create opportunities for collaboration and support. This can include mentorship programs, internships, or joint projects that connect classroom learning to real-world experiences.
3. Principals should involve members of the school community in decision making in all matters regarding school administration in order to foster positive school climate.
4. Principals irrespective of sex difference should adopt leadership styles that are inclusive and promote gender equity within the school community. Foster an environment that values diverse perspectives and ensures equal opportunities for all students, staff, and community members

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