

Autocratic leadership style required of vocational and technical education graduates for small-scale industry operation in Port Harcourt city, Rivers State

Sunny Nwakanma^{1*}, Stanley Ikemefula Mbato²

¹Department of Technical Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State

²Department of Educational Foundations, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

ABSTRACT

This study was carried to examine autocratic leadership style required of vocational and technical education graduates for small-scale industry operation in Port Harcourt city, Rivers State. One research question and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population consisted of 980 employees from 76 small scale industries operating within Port Harcourt Metropolis. A sample of 197 employees was drawn from 12 small scale industries using stratified simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured 12 item questionnaire titled Autocratic Leadership Style and Small-Scale Industries Questionnaire (ASIQ). The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale with response categories as “Strongly Agreed”; “Agreed”; “Disagreed” and “Strongly Disagreed”. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Technical Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Method of internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha with SPSS and reliability coefficients of 0.81 were obtained. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the closeness of the respondents’ mean ratings. The t-test and ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that autocratic style of leadership is not required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt city. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that managers of small-scale industries should endeavor to regularly delegate responsibilities to their employees so as to give them a sense of belonging.

KEYWORDS

autocratic leadership style; vocational and technical education; small-scale industry

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR*

Sunny Nwakanma

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960. Since then, the country has been working tirelessly to achieve economic independence. As a result, various military and civilian administrations in the country have introduced several policies and programmes aimed at capacity building and utilization. These policies and programmes were focused on macro-economic stabilization and the pursuance of a massive trade and investment liberalization to encourage foreign direct investment in the country (Inegbenebor & Igbinomwanhia, 2011). Inegbenebor and Igbinomwanhia further noted that in an effort to achieve this, the country has released most restrictions on current and capital transfers, introduced tax relief for those multinationals willing to invest in the country, and improved access to foreign exchange at near market rates. However, efforts made by these past administrators to encourage the establishment of small-scale industries in the country appear to be inadequate.

To address the situation, governments have demonstrated the recognition that industrial and economic development is fostered not by few large-scale industries, but by numerous small-scale industries, which have the capacity to provide employment and growth in an unprecedented manner. Nwadukwe and Timinepere (2012) observed that Nigerian government from 1977-1979 formulated an industrial policy to foster the establishment and growth of more small and medium scale industries to salvage her economy from recession. Following the policy, a wide range of small-scale industries sprang up in diverse parts of the country.

Rivers State generally and Port Harcourt city in particular were not left out in this quest for industrialization. The state explored several investment opportunities and became involved in virtually all types of enterprises ranging from transportation, manufacturing and production as well as wholesale distribution. Mere observation clearly indicate that these have resulted in the creation of more employment opportunities, goods and services, economic growth and improved standard of living in the state to a reasonable extent. Therefore, each of these small-scale industries functions as an organization. An organization is a social set-up which has a boundary that separates it from its environment, pursues its own collective goals and controls its own performances (Dosunmu & Olusanya, 2011). Thus, an organization is an entity set up for a purpose. The main purpose for any going concern is to create utility. The satisfaction of customers of any enterprises results from the creation of and delivery of quality goods and services. It is important to emphasize that in any formal organization; interactions are rationally coordinated and directed through time on a continuous basis. The person at the helm of affairs is usually the leader. Thus, for an organization to perform effectively there must be holistic interactions between the leader and the employees.

Kraines (2001) posited that the word leadership applies in different disciplines such as politics, business, social work, and education. However, there is a disagreement on the exact meaning of the concept. For instance, Bowey (2004) sees leadership as involving special combination of personal characteristics which reveal the qualities and abilities of individuals. Taffinder (2012) stated that leadership simply means getting people to do things they never thought of doing or want to do and do not believe are possible. It is pertinent to distinguish between leadership as an organizational function and as a personal quality. The former refers to the distribution of power throughout an organization and brings to focus the pattern of power and authority in the organization while the latter refers to the ability of an individual to influence others towards achieving group goals. Leadership in the context of business organizations refers to the ability of managers to positively influence the behaviours of employees towards performing at a level that would enhance the achievement of organizational set goals.

Leadership style is the pattern of behaviour engaged in by leaders when dealing with employees. However, there are various leadership styles that could be adopted by managers of small-scale industries for the achievement of organizational goals. For the purpose of this study, emphasis would be placed on autocratic leadership style identified by Dosunmu and Olusanya (2011).

Autocratic leadership style involves the leader making all the decisions, wielding absolute power, assigning tasks to members of the group and maintaining master-servant relationship with members of the group. In this type of leadership style, the focus of power is with the manager and all interaction within the group move towards the manager (Uchenwamgbe, 2013). This leadership style involves the leader wielding absolute power to himself and such leaders do not get the employees involved in decision making and do not usually delegate responsibilities.

Autocratic leadership also refers to as authoritarian leadership is the type of leadership style where the focus of power is with the manager and all interaction within the group move towards the manager (Uchenwamgbe, 2013). In this case, the manger alone exercises decision-making and authority for determining policy, procedures for achieving goals, work tasks and relationships, control of rewards or punishments. In the words of Ojokuku, Odetayo and Sajuyigbe (2013), autocratic leadership is a classic “do as I say” type of leadership. The authors further explained that leaders who adopt such kind of leadership style are usually inexperienced with leadership thrust upon them in the form of a new position or assignment that involves people management. Autocratic leaders retain for themselves the decision-making rights which can have a long-run effect of damaging an organization irreparably as the leaders force their followers to execute strategies and services in a very narrow way, based on a subjective idea of what success looks like (Sebahattin, Faruk&Ilknur, 2011).

In the view of Umaru, Munirat, Isyaka, Ndule, Nana and Aina (2014), autocratic leadership style is often identified with dictatorial or unreasonable methods, such as leaders' use of fear, threats, and so on. This style of leadership is consistent with production-centered leaders. According to the authors, there are some dangers associated with this style of leadership. For instance, if the leader is quarrelsome and aggressive, the subordinates may be inclined to react negatively to his dominant leadership and may do so by restricting output. Also, since this style of leadership forces group members to be depending upon the leader for directions; their effectiveness may be reduced especially when the leader is absent.

Autocratic leadership style is used when leaders tell their employees what they want done and how they want it accomplished, without getting the advice of their followers (Don, n.d). The author opined that some of the appropriate conditions to use it are when the leader has all the information to solve the problem, have short time frame, and the employees are well motivated. Autocratic leadership is appropriate in settings with a constant stream of new employees, limited time for decision making, unlimited resources, and the need for large-scale co-ordination with other groups and organizations. It is not suited to environments in which members desire to share their opinions and participate in decision-making process. It could be argued that this style of leadership leads to high employee dissatisfaction, turnover, and absenteeism. This style of leadership is usually seen small-scale industries.

Obviously, the overall business scene and activities in Nigeria appear to be dominated by small scale businesses which are established by individual, groups, companies and cooperatives. Most business start off as small but with proper planning and management, then expand and grow. However, it will be risky to assume that small enterprises are exactly like big ones after all the difference is size. But it is necessary to differentiate the small business from the large ones and to associate those characteristic with problems inherent in small business. The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) in Etebefia and Akinkumi (2013) defined small-scale industries as those industries whose fixed asset and cost of new investment does not exceed N10million. The Central Industrial Research and Development (IRD) of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife cited by the authors defined small-scale industries as those industries whose working capital is not exceeding N250, 000 and employing on full time basis 50 workers or less. Small scale industries in the context of this study, refer to those industries whose total fixed assets excluding working capital does not exceed N10million with total number of employees ranging from 5-25. Vocational and technical education prepares graduates with skills required to set up scale-scale industries.

Okoro (2004) referred to vocational and technical education as a form education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. Here, vocational and technical education is seen as a precursor of skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupation. Vocational and technical education is the only form of education that equips individuals with a balanced work behavior embracing cognitive, affective (socio-psychological), psycho-productive and perceptual skills for the world of work. It is that part of the total process of education aimed occupations associated with vocational and technical education programmes, such as, Agricultural, Fine and Applied Art, Business, Home Economics and Technical education (Osuala, 2010). These programmes offer arrays of skills needed for gainful employment in various fields of human endeavor. These skills which are sometimes manipulative in nature makes one more employable in one sector of the economy or the other. Okon (2009) stated that those in Business education could acquire managerial skill, Information Communication and Technology (I.C.T) skill, human relations skill, enterprising skill, communication skill, affective skills, job survival skills and accounting skill. Asdeola(2008) observed that those in Home Economics education can acquire skills in food and nutrition, home management, textile and clothing and family and child care; while those in Fine and Applied Art can acquire skills in painting, sculpture, art history/art education, ceramics, textile, graphics and photography.

Alio (2011) stated that those in Technical education could acquire skills in design, construction, operation, maintenance and trouble-shooting; while Agricultural education provide individuals with skills in crop production, animal husbandry, pest control, weed control and diseases management and control. These skills acquired through VTE prepare and opens large doors of employment opportunities and over 1,200 careers in different sectors of the economy.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The importance of a leader in an organization cannot be undermined. Uchenwamgbe (2013) stated that without leadership, an organization is but a module of men and machines. It is the human factors which bind a group together and motivate it towards goals. Therefore, the efficiency of an organization lies on the leader. Thus, leadership style plays an important role in shaping the behavior and attitude of the members of an organization. In recent years, the study on leadership has drawn more attention due to its role in the success or failure of an organization. Over the years, scholars and researchers have not been unanimous on the best appropriate style of leadership to adopt in an organization and this has led to the formulation of several theories on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. However, the present study centers on autocratic leadership style. This study is imperative as it will reveal the autocratic leadership style required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt the industrial hub of Rivers State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to determine autocratic leadership style required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question guided this study:

In the opinion of employees, what is the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- (1) Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries.
- (2) There is no significant difference in the respondents mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries on the basis of level of education.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. One research question guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population consisted of 980 employees from 76 small scale industries operating within Port Harcourt Metropolis. A sample of 197 employees was drawn from 12 small scale industries using stratified simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Autocratic Leadership Style and Small-Scale Industries Questionnaire (ASIQ).

The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale with response categories as "Strongly Agreed"; "Agreed"; "Disagreed" and "Strongly Disagreed". The instrument was validated by three experts. Method of internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha with SPSS and reliability coefficients of 0.81 were obtained. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the closeness of the respondents' mean ratings. In order to determine the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries, a decision rule based on a mean rating of 2.50 points was used. Therefore, items with mean ratings of 2.50 points and above were regarded as required by the graduates while items with mean ratings below 2.50 points were regarded as not required. t-test and ANOVA were used for testing the null hypotheses. In testing the hypotheses, a null hypothesis was accepted where the calculated F-value is less than the critical value of F. It means that there is no significant difference and the hypothesis will not be rejected.

RESULT

Research Question 1

In the opinion of employees, what is the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Data collected in respect of research question 1 were analyzed and presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries. (N = 197)

S/N	Aspects of autocratic style of leadership	Mean	SD	Decision
(1)	Denying employees freedom to express their views	2.30	.46	Disagreed
(2)	Not welcoming questions or ideas from employees in matters related to organization's affairs	2.20	.40	Disagreed
(3)	Refusing to allow employees participate in the decision-making process	2.10	.46	Disagreed
(4)	Taking vital decisions affecting employees without consulting them	2.39	.46	Disagreed
(5)	Disallowing employees to use their own judgment in solving work-related problems	1.43	.53	Disagreed
(6)	Disallowing employees to demonstrate initiative and creativity in their work performance	2.23	.46	Disagreed
(7)	Using threats and coercion as major means of getting employees perform their duties	2.20	.40	Disagreed
(8)	Discouraging co-operation among employees in the course of discharging assigned duties	1.40	.50	Disagreed
(9)	Blocking interpersonal relationship with employees	2.38	.52	Disagreed
(10)	Taking vital decisions affecting employees without consulting them	2.39	.46	Disagreed
(11)	Firing employees without fair hearing	1.45	.53	Disagreed
(12)	Giving employees responsibilities without commensurate authority	2.44	.50	Disagreed
(13)	Disregarding employees' welfare matters	1.39	.49	Disagreed
Cluster Mean		1.99		Disagreed

The result of the study in table 1 shows that all the items had their mean below cut of point of 2.50. Therefore, all the respondents used for the study disagreed with these items as the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt Rivers State. The cluster mean of 1.99 revealed that respondents rejected all the items as autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries.

Hypothesis 1

Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries.

Data obtained in respect of hypothesis 1 were analyzed and presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Summary of z-test comparison of the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries. (N=197)

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	127	2.08	.11	0.05	195	0.93	1.96	Not Significant
Female	70	2.16	.14					

Data in Table 2 shows that the z-cal value of 0.93 was less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 195 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that male and female respondents in Port Harcourt metropolis do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups was not rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the respondents mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries on the basis of level of education.

Data obtained in respect of hypothesis 2 were analyzed and presented in Table 6.

TABLE 3: Summary of analysis of variance on mean ratings of the respondents on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	60.70	0	2	24.350	
Within Groups	424.63	3	194	3.477	.015
Total	485.333	196		4.662	

As shown in Table 3 there was no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries on the basis of level of education. (SSCE, NCE/ND, Higher qualification), as the F-ratio (2,75) was 3.477 and P-value (.015) was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that autocratic style of leadership is not required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt city. The results revealed the major aspects of autocratic style of leadership which the employees are not required include denying employees freedom to express their views, not welcoming questions or ideas from employees in matters related to organization's affairs, taking vital decisions affecting employees without consulting the employees, disallowing employees to demonstrate initiative and creativity in their work performance, using threats and coercion as major means of getting employees

perform their duties, disregarding employees' welfare matters and so on. This finding is in consonance with Okon and Ison (2016) who carried out a study to examine management styles and employees' performance in small scale business enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The result of the study showed a positive relationship between management styles and employees' performance of small-scale business enterprises, with the exception of autocratic and laissez-faire management styles whose results were negative.

Supporting the above findings, Fu-Jin (2012) earlier opined that autocratic style of leadership is one in which the manager retains as much power and decision-making as possible. Fu-Jin further noted that the manager does not consult employees, neither are they allowed to give any input. Employees are only expected to obey orders without receiving any explanations. Based on the forgoing, it must be emphasized that the premise of the autocratic leadership style is the belief that in most cases, employees cannot make contributions on their own to meet their goals. This type of leadership style undoubtedly tends to focus more on the task and not on the human resources needed to get the task done.

This finding is also in consonance Idowu (2012) who investigated the extent to which autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles affect organizational performance in some selected small-scale industries in South-western Nigeria comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States. Findings from the study revealed that (62%) of the respondents described the leadership style in their organization as autocratic. This shows that the business owners never entertain any form of contribution from the employees. The result of Idowu's study also revealed that the autocratic leadership style inhibits the innovativeness and creativity of the employees which on the long-run would have helped to stabilize the business enterprises. However, one needs to bear in mind that people want not only personal but also human connection and an emotional link with their leaders in the workplace which will encourage their growth and development.

The findings also revealed that male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt city. The findings of the study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents on autocratic style of leadership required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt city, as a result of level of education (SSCE, NCE/ND, Higher qualification). This result is in agreement with Gberevbie, Osibanjo, Adeniji, and Oladayo (2014) whose study revealed that managerial roles based on gender discrimination against women have affected employees' job performance negatively. It therefore means that small scale industries' managers wishing to survive in this present economic reality must imbibe appropriate leadership style. This would enable the industries maintain a reasonable level of performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that autocratic style of leadership is not required of vocational and technical education graduates for the operation of small-scale industries in Port Harcourt city. Rivers State

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- (1) managers of small-scale industries should endeavor to regularly delegate responsibilities to their employees so as to give them a sense of belonging.
- (2) managers should always involve the employees when certain decisions are to be taken in the organizations especially those pertaining employees' welfare

REFERENCES

- [1] Alio, O. (2011). Management, organizational theory and behaviour. Lagos: Molofin No Minees Publishers.
- [2] Bowey. C. (2004). Profiles in Leadership from the Battlefields of Virginia, Amacom
- [3] Don, C. (n.d). Leadership styles. Retrieved from <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/index.html>

- [4] Dosunmu, A. G. & Olusanya, O. (2011). Evaluation of Leadership and Employee Commitment to Work in Nigeria Bottling Company. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 2(1), 204-215.
- [5] Etebefia, O. S. & Akinkunmi, B. W. (2013). The contribution of small-scale industries to the national economy. *Standard Research Journal of Business Management*, 1(2), 60-71. Retrieved from <http://standresjournals.org/journals/SRJBM>
- [6] Fu-Jin, S. (2012). The description of supervisory behaviour. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 37(1), 1-6. Retrieved From www.ripublication.com/gjmbs_spl/gjmbsv3n3spl_14.pdf
- [7] Gberevbie, A., Osibanjo, L. N., Adeniji, H. A., & Oladayo, A. B. (2014). Leadership and organizational performance in the Nigeria small and medium enterprises. *American Journal of Business, Economics and Management*, 2(5), 121-127. Retrieved from <http://www.openscienceonline.com/journal/ajbem>
- [8] Idowu, A. (2012). Evaluation of leadership and organizational performance on small scale industries in Nigeria. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1-24. Retrieved from <http://www.hjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx>
- [9] Inegbenebor, A. U. & Igbinomwanhia, O. R. (2011). Entrepreneurship in a developing society. In F.C. Okafor., P. A. Isenmila., A.U. Inegbenebor., & P.A. Donwa. (Eds.). *Entrepreneurship: A practical approach*. Revised edition. (pp. 3-12). Benin City: Mindex Publishing Company Limited.
- [10] Kraines.G. (2001). Accountability leadership: How to strengthen productivity through sound managerial leadership. Career press Incorporated. Retrieve from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_84.htm
- [11] Nwadukwe, U. C. & Timinepere, C. O. (2012). Management styles and organizational effectiveness: An appraisal of private enterprises in Eastern Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(9), 198-204.
- [12] Ojokuku, R. M., Odetayo, T. A., & Sajuyigbe, A. S. (2012). Impact of leadership style on organizational performance: A case study of Nigerian Banks. *American Journal of Business and Management*, 1(4), 202-207. Retrieved from www.worldscholars.org/index.php/ajbm/article/downloads/212/122.pdf
- [13] Okon, O. (2009). Industrial development and growth in Nigeria: Lessons and challenges. Retrieved from <http://file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/wp2011-019.pdf>
- [14] Okon, O., & Isong, A. (2016). You as an entrepreneur. In F.C. Okafor., P. A. Isenmila., A.U. Inegbenebor., & P.A. Donwa (Eds.). *Entrepreneurship: A practical approach*. Revised edition. (Pp 27-39). Benin City: Mindex Publishing Company Limited.
- [15] Okoro, R. (2004). Leadership Style, organizational commitment and job satisfaction: A case Study on high school principals in Tehran, Iran. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(4), 263-267. DOI: 10.11634/232907811301444.
- [16] Osuala, L. C. (2010). Leadership style, organizational culture and performance: Empirical evidence from UK companies. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(4), 766-771.
- [17] Sebahattin, Y., Faruk, B., & Ilknur, T.B. (2011). The effect of leadership and innovativeness on business performance. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814051131
- [18] Taffinder, P. (2012). *Leadership crash course: How to create personal leadership value*. London: GBR Ltd.
- [19] Uchenwamgbe, B. P. (2013). Effects of leadership style on organizational performance in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 5(23), 15-25. Retrieved from [www.pakacademicsearch.com/pdf-files/ech/517/53-73 vol5, No23 \(2013\)](http://www.pakacademicsearch.com/pdf-files/ech/517/53-73%20vol5,%20No23%20(2013).).
- [20] Umar, D. M., Munirat, O. Y., Isyaka, M. S., Ndule., T. I., Nana, U. B., & Aina, O. K. (2014). The relationship between leadership styles and employees' performance in organizations. A study of selected business organizations in federal capital territory, Abuja, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(22), 180-193. Retrieved from www.iiste.org