Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style and the Academic Performance of Students in Select Secondary Schools in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Teachers' leadership is crucial to the academic performance of students. Students' learning behaviour and outcome are influenced largely by the leadership style of their teachers. Teachers' leadership style affects students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. The effects of teachers' leadership style on any, or all the three domains of learning, no doubt, have implications for the social development and academic performance of students. Considering the importance of teachers' leadership in the overall development of the student, this study investigated the effect of teachers' leadership style on the academic performance of secondary school students in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State. The study specifically interrogated the effect of teachers' transformational leadership on the motivation and academic performance of students in the secondary schools within Owerri Educational Zone. The Leader-member exchange theory served as the theoretical framework of the study. A sample of 363 students was drawn from four schools in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The survey data were presented using frequency distribution tables while the hypothesis was tested using the chi-square statistical tool. The study found that teachers' transformational leadership style has had positive effect on students' motivation and academic performance in the secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone. The study recommended that teachers should adopt transformational leadership style in order to get the best out of students.

Key words- Motivation, Leadership, Performance, Education, Style

Background of the Study

Education is a major tool for empowering people to realize their full potentials. Education enables individuals to conceive and implement ideas. A person's standard of living is largely dependent on the quality and level of education obtained. Education is fundamental to the social, political and economic growth of a nation. It is through education that the manpower and values needed for national development are produced and propagated. According to the Global Partnership for Education,

(2019), education has the power to make the world a better place. It (education) can help to reduce poverty, to increase household income, and to reduce infant mortality, gender inequality and insecurity on a global scale (Global Partnership for Education, 2019). The effort of the major stakeholders in the education system of every society namely, parents, administrators, teachers, students and policy makers, are primarily directed toward producing high quality educational delivery and enhancing the academic performance of learners. The academic performance of students is often used as an evaluation measure of educational delivery in most, if not all, societies. The major target of educational system is to produce high quality human capital to drive the development of the society. The benefits of education are not only to the society as a whole, as individuals and families equally benefit from education. The life chances of individuals and their families usually increase as their education increases. The pressure of globalization and capitalism, has contributed immensely to societal demand for the production of excellent students and high quality manpower by educational institutions (Arbuckle, 2009). The pressure is increasingly felt by the major actors in the educational system, especially the teachers, who perform the crucial role of educating and nurturing pupils from a very tender age. The ability of the teacher to impact positively on the students at the foundation stage (nursery, primary and secondary level) is vital to the overall development of the child and to his/her benefits to the society at large. The effectiveness of the teacher is central to the educational attainment or performance of a student and the effectiveness of the school.

The educational attainment or performance of a student is influenced by many factors, one of which is Teachers' leadership. Leadership is what a teacher employs in his or her dealings with students (Billmayer, 2012; Granstrom, 2012). The association of leadership with the work that teachers perform can be explained by the fact that: (a) education is the managing of someone's learning and development, and (b), a teaching situation can be perceived as a small social organization, with the teacher as leader and the students as followers. Teachers' leadership is tightly linked to student achievement (Berry, Daughtrey & Wieder, 2010: 2). Teacher leadership is a critical component of effective teaching and school success. Accomplished Teachers have the most intimate knowledge of the content they must teach students. They equally have unique knowledge helpful in tailoring and streamlining services to students (Berry, Daughtrey & Wieder, 2010: 9). Teachers play fundamental roles in the education of individuals. They deploy their knowledge skills and experience to positively impact the lives of their students. It is impossible to have a school without teachers. The success of a school and its students depends greatly on the teachers employed by the school.

The success of a school and the performance of the students are usually judged through their success at national examinations. Hence, the major stakeholders of schools particularly the teachers and students work towards scoring good grades during the national examinations. The performance of the students in national examination linked to the leadership style of their teachers. This study therefore seeks to investigate the leadership styles adopted by teachers in secondary schools, with particular reference to secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State. The leadership styles of teachers' have varied effects on students. Teachers' leadership style may affect students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. The effect on any or the three domains of learning no doubt has implications for the social development and academic performance of any student. The academic performance of students in public schools in Imo State in recent time has been a source of worry for educational stakeholders. The rate of failure in core subjects such as English language and mathematics has often led to low university admission rates. This has also contributed to the increasing rate of examination malpractice and the emergence of examination malpractice centers commonly known as 'miracle centers'. Thus, it is pertinent to examine the effect of teachers' leadership style on students' motivation and academic performance, using the secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone as focal point.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of teachers' transformational leadership style on students' academic performance of students in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State. The purposes include:

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of the study is Owerri Educational Zone. The Zone is divided into two sub-zones: Zone I and Zone II. These sub-zones consist of five (5) and four (4) local government areas (LGAs) respectively, making a total of nine (9) LGAs in Owerri Educational Zone. The thematic scope of the study is limited to investigating the relationship between teachers' transformational leadership style and the academic performance of secondary school students in Owerri Educational Zone.

Research Hypothesis

H_1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' transformational leadership style and

students' academic Performance in the secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo

State.

Concept of Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns, and later broadened by Bernard M. Bass (Cherry, 2019).Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which leaders encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create change that will help grow the organization (White, 2018). It is characterized by a mixed approach to work based challenges. Transformational leaders help their subordinates to solve work-related tasks and also teach them how to tackle the challenges. This type of leadership has a high level of communication between the team members (Al-Malki & Juan, 2018). Transformational leadership can thus be seen as a constellation of three behaviours including the ability of leaders to inspire followers, work with subordinates individually to meet their idiosyncratic needs (Bass 1985), and encourage creative and effortful problem solving (Seltzer & Bass, 1990).

The transformational leadership model encourages leaders to demonstrate authentic, strong leadership with the idea that employees will be inspired to follow suit. A transformation leader inspires staff by creating an environment of intellectual stimulation. He fosters an environment in which employees voice ideas and converse freely **(Hein, 2013)**. According to Bass (1985), a transformational leader is someone who:

- Builds company culture by encouraging employees to move from an attitude of self-interest to a mindset where they are working for the common good
- Fosters an ethical work environment with clear values, priorities and standards
- Provides coaching and mentoring but allowing employees to make decisions and take ownership of tasks

Concept of Teacher Leadership

There appears not to be a common definition for teacher leadership. The term teacher leadership means different things to different persons. Some teachers and educational researchers view teacher leadership as formal administrative roles, while

others (teachers and educational researchers) view it as any opportunity in which teachers contribute to the decision making process (Donaldson & Johnson, 2007). Curtis (2013:4) defined teacher leadership as "specific roles and responsibilities that recognize the talents of the most effective teachers and deploy them in the service of student learning, adult learning and collaboration, and school and system improvement." The Institute of Educational Leadership (2001, in Cosenza 2015:79) suggested that teacher leadership is not about power, but about teachers extending their presence beyond the classroom by seeking additional challenges and growth opportunities.

The concept of teacher leadership is increasingly seen as a key component for both the success of schools and the professionalization of teachers (Boles & Troen, 1994; Dozier, 2007; Greenlee, 2007). In recent times, some schools have been restructuring traditional governance models and redefining leadership functions in ways that allows teachers to continue in their position while also taking on more responsibility in the governance of a school. Under the emerging trend, teacher-leaders perform roles that are officially recognized and occupy leadership positions that entail specific responsibilities and assignments. Some of the roles and responsibilities undertaken by a teacher-leader may include:

- Training, supervising, and mentoring new teachers or student-teachers
- Leading efforts to modify or improve school-wide or content-area curriculum
- Leading a specific school-improvement initiative, such as a program designed to improve the quality of reading instruction throughout a school
- Acting as a facilitator and coordinator of a professional learning community or other group of teachers working together to improve their teaching skills (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

Many educators and educational researchers have outlined some standards and guidelines for teacher leadership. For example, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium in 2011 developed the teacher leader model standard to describe the scope of teacher leadership. The teacher leader model standards (2011) consisted of several domains which include:

- Domain I: Fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning
- Domain II: Accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning
- Domain III: Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement
- Domain IV: Facilitating improvement in instruction and student learning
- Domain V: Promoting the use of assessment and data for school and district improvement
- Domain VI: Improving outreach and collaboration with families and community

The teacher leader model standards were developed to encourage discussions about the competencies required for teacher leadership as means for school transformation (Teacher Leader Model Standards 2011, In Cosenza 2015:82). The standards seek to provide a set of guidelines that generate influence and respect for teachers through being continuous learners, being approachable, using group skills and influence to improve the educational practices of their peers. The standards are equally intended to model effective practices and support collaborative team structures within the schools (Cosenza 2015:82).

Teacher Leadership Style and Students Academic Performance

Over the years, scholars have studied the link between the leadership style of educational stakeholders and the academic performance of students. For instance, Isundwa (2015) investigated the influence of leadership styles on secondary school students' academic performance in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. The findings of the study suggest that there is a strong influence of leadership style of head teachers on students' academic achievement/performance. Based on the findings, Isundwa (2015) recommended that head teachers should use more of democratic leadership style if they want to achieve good academic performance.

Wallace (2007) examined the relationship between leadership and students learning behaviour. They found that transformational leadership had significant effect on students' reaction, learning and behaviour in the classroom. Tsai and Liu (2012) found moderate positive correlations between teacher's transformational leadership style and students' engagement and satisfaction which in turn influence their evaluations on the quality of teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been offered to explain the characteristics, role and impact of leaders in organizations and society. Cherry (2019) states that leadership theories can be classified into eight major types: (1) "Great Man" theories, (2) Trait Theories, (3) Contingency theories, (4) Situational theories, (5) Behavioural theories, (6) Participative theories, (7) Management theories, and, (8) Relationship theories. These theories seek to explain how and why certain people become leaders, why some people excel more than others in leadership position, and to identify the behaviours that can enhance leadership effectiveness in different situations. For instance, the Great Man theories of leadership assume that great leaders are born with the necessary intrinsic characteristics such as charisma, confidence, intelligence and social skills (Cherry, 2019).

According to Cherry (2019) Situational theories of leadership propose that leaders choose the best course of action based on situational variables. Behavioral theories of leadership assume that great leaders are made, not born. Participative leadership theories suggest that the ideal leadership style is one that encourages the participation and contribution of group members in decision-making (and implementation) process. The management theories, often referred to as transactional theories, focus on the role of supervision, and apply the reward and punishment system (carrot and stick approach) of leadership (Cherry, 2019).

The Relationship theories of leadership focus upon the interactions, relationships and connections formed between leaders and followers. The relationship theories, often termed transformational theories, assume that the nature and quality of relationship between the leader and the follower(s) have corresponding effects on the performance of the followers and organization. Examples of relationship theories are the social exchange theory, Perceived Organization Support theory, Interactional Justice theory, and the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. This study on teachers' leadership style and the effect on academic performance of students in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State Nigeria, is anchored on the Leader-member exchange theory.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the interactions between leader(s) and follower(s). In a classroom setting, the teacher is the leader, while the students are the followers. The application of Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory in this study will entail exploring how the teacher and students develop relationships that could influence the interpersonal development, attitude and learning behaviour of students. The LMX theory involves a three step process namely, role taking, role making and routinization. It is at the routinization stage that routines, norms and expectations are established (Accipio.com).

Leader-member exchange (LMX) is a dyadic relational approach. The central premise behind leader-member exchange theory is that within work units or teams (or, classrooms), different types of relationships develop between leaders (teachers) and their subordinates (students) (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997: 48). LMX research reveals that leaders (teachers) form warm, inclusive, and communicative relationship with some members (students) compared to others (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015). Leaders (teachers) often establish stronger or closer relationship with a select few of lieutenants, assistants, (or students) to whom they give higher levels of responsibility, greater access to resources, and greater opportunity to contribute to decision making. It is often argued that this select few (in-group) are more committed to task (or, learning) objectives (Changingminds.org). Those who have weak leader-member exchange are less likely, to participate in decision making and class activity, and to enjoy full access to resources. Such subordinates or students are more likely to be less committed, to task or learning objectives or to volunteer for extra-work.

Table 1: Respondents view on the effect of teachers' transformational leadership style on students academic performance

	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
11)	My english test scores have improved because of my teacher's personal interest in my ability	197 (54.3%)	153 (42.1%)	4 (1.1%)	9 (2.5%)	363 (100%)
12)	My maths test scores have improved because my teacher challenges me constantly with assignments	145 (39.9%)	192 (52.9%)	21 (5.8%)	5 (1.4%)	363 (100%)
13)	My teacher's willingness to assist me after classes contributed to my success in the last school examination	205 (56.5%)	148 (40.8%)	7 (1.9%)	3 (0.8%)	363 (100%)
14)	My teacher's use of humour put me at ease and makes me acquire more knowledge	225 (62%)	110 (30.3%)	7 (1.9%)	21 (5.8%)	363 (100%)

Table 4.2 shows that out of the 363 respondents who attended to questionnaire item eleven (11) which reads 'My english test scores have improved because of my teacher's personal interest in my ability,' 197 (54.3%) of them strongly agreed, 153 (42.1%) agreed, 4 (1.1%) disagreed, while 9 (2.5%) strongly disagreed. The table indicates that the responses to statement, 'my maths test scores have improved because my teacher challenges me constantly with assignments,' were as follows: 145

(39.9%) strongly agree, 192 (52.9%) agree, 21 (5.8%) disagree, and 5 (1.4%) strongly agree. With regard to questionnaire item thirteen (13) which reads: 'my teacher's willingness to assist me after classes contributed to my success in the last school examination, 205 (56.5%) of the 363 respondents strongly agreed, 148 (40.8%) respondents agreed, 7 (1.9%) respondents disagreed, and 3 (0.8%) respondents strongly disagreed. Table 4.2 reveals that the responses to questionnaire item fourteen (14) which reads, 'my teacher's use of humour put me at ease which makes me to acquire more knowledge, were as follows: 225 (62%) strongly agree, 110 (30.3%) agree, 7 (1.9%) disagree, and 21(5.8%) strongly disagree.

Table 4.2 clearly reveals that: the majority of the 363 respondents affirmed that: their English scores have improved because of their teachers' personal interest in their ability; their maths scores have improved because their teachers challenge them with assignments; their teachers willingness to assist them after classes contributed to their success in the last exam; and that, their teachers use of humour to put them at ease which makes them to acquire more knowledge.

4.2.2 Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 2: there is no significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership
          style and students academic performance

To test this hypothesis, the responses of the respondents in items 11, 12 and 13 were analyzed as presented in table 4.

Table II: Chi-square Analysis of Relationship between Teachers Transformational Leadership and Students Academic Performance.

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
11	197	153	9	4	363B1
12	145	192	21	5	363B2
13	205	188	7	3	363B3
Total	547A1	533A2	37A3	12A4	1089

Computing formula for chi-square

$$X2 = \frac{\sum(O_1 - E_1)^2}{E_1}$$

Where $\sum$ = Summation

O = Observed values

E = Expected values

To obtain the expected frequencies

$$E = \frac{\text{Row total x column}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

Decision Rule

If the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Cell $A_1 B_1$ $\dfrac{547 \times 363}{1089} = 182.3$

Cell $A_2 B_1$ $\dfrac{533 \times 363}{1089} = 177.7$

Cell $A_3 B_1$ $\dfrac{37 \times 363}{1089} = 12.3$

Cell $A_4 B_1$ $\dfrac{12 \times 363}{1089} = 4$

Cell $A_1 B_2$ $\dfrac{547 \times 363}{1089} = 182.3$

Cell $A_2 B_2$ $\dfrac{533 \times 363}{1089} = 177.7$

Cell $A_3 B_2$ $\dfrac{37 \times 363}{1089} = 12.3$

Cell $A_4 B_2$ $\dfrac{12 \times 363}{1089} = 4$

Cell $A_1 B_3$ $\dfrac{547 \times 363}{1089} = 182.3$

Cell $A_2 B_3$ $\dfrac{533 \times 363}{1089} = 177.7$

Cell $A_3 B_3$ $\dfrac{37 \times 363}{1089} = 12.3$

Cell $A_4 B_3$ $\dfrac{12 \times 363}{1089} = 4$

Placing the observed and expected values in a tabular form, we have;

Table II1: Data for Hypothesis one

O	E	(O - E)	$(O - E)^{2/E}$
547	182.3	364.7	4.0
533	177.7	355.3	3.9

37	12.3	24.7	4.0
12	4	8	4.0
547	182.3	364.7	4.0
533	177.7	355.3	3.9
37	12.3	24.7	4.0
12	4	8	4.0
547	182.3	364.7	4.0
533	177.7	355.3	3.9
37	12.3	24.7	4.0
12	4	8	4.0
Total			47.7

The table above is a 4 x 2 contingency table, hence the degree of freedom.

(df) = (C - 1) (R - 1)

(df) = (4 - 1) (2 - 1)

df = 3 x 1 = 3

Thus, df = 3.

The table value of X^2 at 0.05 significance level of and 3 degree of freedom is equal to 7.815. The calculated value of X^2 is equal to 47.7. Since the calculated value of X^2 is greater than the table value of X^2, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership and students academic performance. Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership and students academic performance.

The analysis of data pertaining to research question two that asks, *In what way does teachers' transformational leadership style affect students' academic performance in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State, Nigeria*?, was presented in Table 4.2. Table 4.2 clearly revealed that: the majority of the 363 respondents affirmed that: their English scores have improved because of their teachers' personal interest in their ability; their maths scores have

The second research hypothesis which states there is no significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership style and students academic performance. Hypothesis two was tested with chi-square statistic. The test result showed that the calculated value of X^2 (47.7) is greater than the table value of X^2 (7.815). Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis that

there is no significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership style and students academic performance, was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of teachers' transformational leaders' style on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone. The study found that teachers' transformational leadership style has had positive effect on secondary school students academic performance. The study revealed that teachers' transformational leadership styles contributed to the improvement of students' english and maths scores, to students' success in the last school examination, and to students desire to acquire more knowledge. These assertions are premised upon the responses of the majority of the respondents to questionnaire items 11, 12, 13 and 14 respectively as reflected in Table 4.2. Hypothesis two which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership style and students academic performance, was tested with chi-square statistic. The test result provided proof for the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between teachers transformational leadership style and students academic performance. These findings corroborate the findings of Paul and Toyin (2017) that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and performance of students in selected secondary schools Gasabo District, Kigali Rwanda. This pattern fits the proposition of the leader-member exchange theory which states that students who establish and experience high quality (*i.e.*, warm, cordial, inspiring) relationship with their teachers are more likely to perform better academically (and in other endeavours) than students who have and experience low quality (unfriendly, hostile, uninspiring) with their teachers.

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Conclusion

The leadership style of teachers is a critical factor that has great effect on students learning behaviour and outcome. The attitude and behaviour of teachers as classroom leaders influences students motivation to learn. Teachers' classroom attitude and behaviour can motivate or de-motivate students. Students' desire to learning and effort towards learning are inextricable linked to teachers' leadership style in and outside the classroom.

There are evidences (as seen in this work) to show that students who perceive, establish and experience warm and inspiring relationships volunteer answers in class, enjoy attending classes, and are not deterred by failure in class. This category of students, take their study serious and show confidence. The findings of the study suggests that such students perform better academically than students who perceive, establish and experience hostile and uninspiring relationship with their teachers. Thus, the conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that teachers' transformational leadership style has had some positive effects on the academic performance of secondary school students in Owerri Educational Zone, Imo State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the research finding, the following recommendations are hereby proffered by the researcher:

1. Teachers should adopt transformational leadership styles in the classroom in order to get the

 best out of students.

2. Teachers should be continually trained on how to tailor their teaching methods to suit in the

 needs of the students.

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