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APPLICATION OF LEADERSHIP THEORIES AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AMONG REGISTRARS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH WEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between the application of leadership theories and effective communication among registrars at state universities in North West Nigeria. The study adopted correlational design. Data were collected using quantitative research methodologies, with a two questionnaires. The study had a population of 369 participants, with a sample size of 169. Inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment of Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found significant and positive relationships between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial Grid Theory, Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory, and Fielder's Contingency Leadership Theory, and effective communication among registrars. These findings indicate that the use of suitable theory can improve communication and overall performance in university management.

Keywords: Leadership Theories, Effective Communication, Registrars, State Universities, Nigeria

Introduction

The quality of an organization is often judged by the perceived success of that organization, and often judged by the quality of leadership. Leadership is a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Leadership can be seen as the ability to ignite a fire and influence others towards the achievement of common goals that contribute to a commonly agreed purpose, such as professional, organizational and community development and improvement of practice and of life generally. This process requires leadership attributes such as wisdom, knowledge, higher order skills, character and beliefs and values.

Leader is one who has an ability to take charge, direct, encourage, or stimulate others (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Luthra and Dahiya further posit that leaders possess an

attitude to convince subordinates and to make them follow the goals or the participles defined by them. Leaders are results oriented hence, well trained and expert in controlling difficult to difficult conditions and help to enhance the outputs of teams working with him. A leader could be anyone, who has charge taking attitude. He can be a president of a country or an executive working in an organization with cluster of leadership qualities, but are not able to lead if they are not good communicators.

The managerial grid model (The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid model)is a self-assessment tool by which individuals and organizations can identify a manager's or leader's style (Pratt, 2023). Pratt further posits that the grid was originally developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton in the 1960s and has evolved in subsequent decades. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory is a leadership model that categorizes leaders based on their concern for people and production. The model divides leaders into five styles: Country Club Management (1,9), Task Management (9,1), Middle-of-the-Road Management (5,5), Team Management (9,9), and Impoverished Management (1,1). The grid identifies leadership styles and their strengths and weaknesses, suggesting that the most effective leaders balance their concerns for people and production, leading to high employee satisfaction and organizational performance. It also aids in leadership development and helps leaders develop more effective styles.

The Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum of Leadership depicts seven different styles of management differentiated by the degree of control exerted by the manager over their team (McPheat, 2022). McPheat further explained that Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leadership Continuum Theory is a model that explains leadership styles, ranging from autocratic to participative. It divides leadership into seven levels: autocratic, autocratic with explanation, consultative, participative, group decision, committee, and laissez-faire. Factors influencing leadership styles include the leader's personality, subordinates' characteristics, task nature, and organizational culture. The theory emphasizes adapting leadership style to specific situations, encouraging employee involvement, and helping leaders develop a range of styles.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory, also known as Fiedler's Contingency Model or Fiedler's Theory of Leadership, states that there is not one best style of leadership. Rather, the most effective leadership style for any given situation is one that aligns with the situation at hand (Asana, 2024). Asana further put forward that the theory was developed in the 1960s by Austrian psychologist, Professor Fred Fiedler. He studied leaders' personalities and characteristics and came to the conclusion that leadership style, since it is formed through one's life experiences, is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to change. Fiedler's Contingency Leadership Theory suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on the fit between their leadership style and the situation they are in. The theory identifies three key situational factors: leader-member relations, task

structure, and position power. Fiedler developed a Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) scale to measure a leader's leadership style, with high scores indicating a people-oriented style and low scores indicating a task-oriented style. The most effective leadership style depends on the combination of the leader's LPC score and situational factors. The theory has implications for leadership flexibility, situational assessment, and leadership development.

According to Northhouse (2007), leadership is the ability to make things happen through others by organising, motivating and inspiring them. It implies the desire and ability to establish clarity and organise resources to achieve the company vision. It is underpinned by the ability to communicate. Effective and accurate communication act as an important factor to grow as an efficient and successful leader or manager. To achieve professional success managers must be effective and convincing communicators. Luthra and Dahiya (2015) stated that Communication enables leaders to share what they have and what they expect from others. So, it is effective communication, which makes leaders to lead successfully. Good communication skills help to develop better understanding and beliefs among team workers inspire them to follow the principles and values which their leader wants to inculcate in them. In the absence of good communication skills, a manager fails to achieve the goals set by him and by the organizations and makes him ineffective leader.

Communication in school administration is the process of exchanging information and ideas between members of the school community, including school leaders, teachers, staff, parents, and students (Allen & Easley, 2011). Allen and Easley further posit that it is essential for fostering a positive and productive learning environment, building strong relationships among all stakeholders, and ensuring that everyone is kept informed about important matters. Effective communication is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment from all stakeholders in the school community. By prioritizing and nurturing effective communication practices, school administrators can create a supportive, collaborative, and successful learning environment for all students. Communication is as important aspect of the directing function of management as supervision, motivation and leadership (Sharma & Kumar 2019). The success of management depends on a great deal on effective communication

By interacting more efficiently with his team and colleagues, a manager can increase his potential and will be able to get work done by members of his team. Good leaders are very well aware with the fact that productive communication is not a one way process rather there are two key factors which complete communication process: speaking and listening with understanding. They know that they cannot make this process continues until unless they are heard and understood appropriately by their team members.

To achieve professional success managers must be effective and convincing communicators. In the words of Froschheiser (2023), it is important that managers and their teams must learn the

how to communicate perfectly as this will not only help teams to complete their projects successfully, but also enable organizations to achieve success and growth. As an administrative manager of institution, one need to apply leadership theories to motivate the subordinates or team, communicate your vision, and adapt to changing circumstances. Leadership Theories provide alternative ways to look at how goals are set and accomplished through different styles and systems of leadership and administration. Theories allow educational leaders to predict the outcome of their decisions. By examining relevant theories, an administrator has an idea of what reactions and outcomes to expect from certain actions or policies.

In the context of educational institution, the University which is the concerns of this study which focuses on application of Leadership Theories and Effective Communication among Registrars in State Universities in North West, Nigeria, leadership will naturally refer to the officers of the institutions as recognized by the laws and statutes that establish the institutions. In the Universities, these are the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of Senate, the other Principal Officers, Deputy Vice-Chancellor(s), the University Librarian, the Bursar, Provosts, Deans, Heads of Department/Units, Directors of various units of operations of the University and the Registrar and Secretary to Council, Senate, Congregation and Convocation who is the subject matter of this study.

Several researches have been conducted on the implementation of leadership theories. For example, Balbuena et al. (2020) did a study on applied leadership theories to investigate the impact of leadership styles on productivity in Philippine higher education institutions. The findings revealed that more leadership behaviors were highly connected with higher organizational productivity, although leader-follower relationships were not significantly associated. Mariyadas and Saravanakumar (2021) look into the effects of appropriate management theories on a school's development and how principals might use them to create peaceful administration. They examined pertinent studies on principal management theories and examined the attributes of composed leadership styles and management strategies in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka's top-performing schools. According to the survey, educators were happy with their workplace and felt that instructors and school officials recognized their achievements.

In an in-service training programme, Rochnia, Radisch, and Kastens (2023) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the effects of research and practice emphasis on theory application and teaching quality. The findings demonstrated that, in the second phase, theory application and instruction qualities are improved by significant research and practice orientation. Otache (2021) investigated the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between TPB constructs (attitudes toward behavior [ATB], subjective norms [SN], and perceived behavioral control [PBC]) and hospitality management students'

entrepreneurial intentions (EIs). The study discovered that self-confidence influences the link between theory of planned behavior (TPB) and entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) in hospitality management students. The findings revealed a substantial positive relationship between ATB and PBC, with self-confidence playing a key role. Talaumbauna, Anom, and Iswadi (2023) investigated the role of the Principal's communication style and motivation in the performance of the State Civil Apparatus at State Senior High School 57 Jakarta. The results showed effective communication between the Principal and teachers, promoting collaboration, trust, and problem-solving. Amie-Ogan, and Brown (2024) also examined the relationship between the application of administrative theories and school administrators' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and found that there was significant relationship between the application of scientific, administrative and human relations theories and school administrators' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The Registrar office in a university is divided into academic, personnel, and general administration. It plays a significant leadership role within the institution but lacks formal training due to many registrars rising from the ranks of registry to the registrar position. This results in variations in leadership styles due to factors such as background, years of experience, number of subordinates, education, and natural style.

The focus on academic capacity building without developing managerial competences and leadership capacities, as well as understanding university culture, may pose challenges to the maximum corporate achievement of objectives. Research has been conducted to examine the application of leadership theories to enhance effective communication among registrars in state universities in North-West Nigeria.

Challenges faced by institutions include changing workplace relations, shrinking resources, increasing university size, diversification of student populations, new legislation regarding financial aid, reporting, graduation rates, security issues, and academic integrity, and the technological revolution in the last two decades.

There is no relevant research done in this region regarding the problem under investigation. Therefore, the researchers see it imperative to investigate the application of leadership theories and effective communication among registrars in state universities in North-West Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to find out the relationship between application of leadership theories and effective communication among the registrars in State Universities in North West Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to find out:

1. The relationship between the application of Blake and Mouton's Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars

in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria.

2. The relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria.
3. The relationship between the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

In order to guide the conduct of this study, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. **Ho_1**. There is no relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria.
2. **Ho_2.** There is no relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria.
3. **Ho_3**. There is no relationship between the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria.

Research Method

Research Design

The research design employed for this study is correlational research design. This is because correlational survey seeks to establish relationship between an independent and a dependent variable. It is a type of research that is concerned with determining or measuring the degree of relationship between two or more variables for the purpose of making predictions about such relationships.

Population of the Study

The study's participants will be 369; which include management staff from state universities in Northwest Nigeria. The management staff included the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors Strategy, Innovation and Service Delivery, Deputy Vice Chancellors Research and Innovations, Provost of medical colleges, Registrar, Bursar, Chief Librarian, Dean of Students' Affairs, Directors of Works, Physical Planning, Academic Planning, Research and Innovations, and ICT, as well as Coordinators of remedial studies and Heads of Departments and deans of faculties. The management staff also included a mix of male and female, experienced and inexperienced individuals, with qualifications ranging from SSCE to PhD. Other members of the institutions' management level, such as Council members who are not full-time employees, were not involved in the study. The participants will also include academic staff from the ranks of senior lecturers to Professor, as well as non-academic staff

from grade level 6 to grade level 16. The researchers selected one State University from each State in the Northwest Zone, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researchers selected one State University from each State of the Northwest zone, Nigeria. The Northwest State Universities selected were Aliko Dangote University of Science and Technology (ADUSTECH), Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Sule Lamido University, Kafin Hausa, Jigawa, Umar Musa Yar'adua University Katsina and Zamfara State University, Talata Mafara. The management staff of the Universities that will be for this study are 369. The sample size of 169 was determined from the population of 369 using Research Advisor (2006). The staff were stratified as Principal Officers and Extended Management Staff, while proportionate sampling was used to determine the sample size drawn from each stratum and institution. The simple random sampling was used to select participants from within each institution.

Instrumentations

The study employed two structured questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. The first instrument, titled: "Application of Leadership Theories Rating Scale" (ALTRS) which served as the instrument for collecting data on application of leadership theories in state owned universities in North-West, Nigeria. The ALTRS is structured on a 5–point Likert's scale model ranging from 1 point = Very Low Extent (VLE = 0.00-1.49); 2 points = Low Extent (LE =1.50-2.99); 3 points = Moderate Extent (ME = 3.00-3.49); 4 points = High Extent (HE =3.50-4.49); and 5 points = Very High Extent (VHE =4.50-5.00). The mean score of 3.00 points and above on the scale of 5.0 was used as cut-off for satisfactory extent of application of leadership theories while below 3.00 mean is unsatisfactory extent of application of leadership theories in state owned universities in North-West, Nigeria.

The second questionnaire, Effective Communication Rate Scale (ECRS) will be used to collect data on effective communication in state owned universities in Northwest Zone, Nigeria. The ECRS was structured on a 5–point Likert's scale model ranging from 1 point = Very Low Extent (VLE = 0.00-1.49); 2 points = Low Extent (LE =1.50-2.99); 3 points = Moderate Extent (ME = 3.00-3.49); 4 points = High Extent (HE =3.50-4.49); and 5 points = Very High Extent (VHE =4.50-5.00). The mean score of 3.00 points and above on the scale of 5.0 was used as cut-off for satisfactory extent of effective communication in State owned Universities in Northwest Zone, Nigeria while below 3.00 mean is unsatisfactory extent of effective communication in state owned universities in Northwest Zone, Nigeria.

Validity of the Instrument

The content validity of Application of Leadership Theories Rating Scale (ALTRS) was determined by validating the instrument by experts in the fields of education from department of Educational

Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. Thus, the validity of ALTRS was confirmed. The content validity of Effective Communication Rate Scale (ECRS) was determined by validating the instrument by experts in the fields of education from department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. Thus, the validity of ECRS was confirmed.

Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers obtained the reliability of the two instruments (questionnaires), using test-retest in one of the state owed universities in Northwest that was not captured as part of selected state owned universities in the Northwest, Nigeria. . A pilot test of the Application of Leadership Theories Rating Scale (ALTRS) and Effective Communication Rate Scale (ECRS) were carried out through test-retest method within the interval of four weeks. The scores of the pilot study obtained via test-retest were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and reliability indices of 0.76, and 0.72 were obtained. This affirmed that ALTRS and ECRS were all reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The data for this study was collected with the help of fourteen research assistant using direct delivery methods in administration and collection of the completed questionnaire from the respondents. Since the research assistants were trained on how the instrument will be administered and retrieved from respondents, within four weeks, two research assistants from each state as well as the researchers administered the instruments to universities in each states, to avoid lost. The completed instruments were collected. The questionnaires were retrieved within four weeks after completion for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Inferential statistics was employed for data analysis in this study. Inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment of Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The researchers used the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient analysis because the study is on the relationship (positive or negative) of independent and dependent variables. The researchers used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis software.

Presentation of Results

Hypothesis One (Ho_1): There is no relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Table 1 gives the details as follows:

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Table 1: Relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial Grid Theory	169	3.7521	.6694				
				167	0.504	0.000	Rejected
Effective Communication among the Registrars	169	3.2750	.5456				

Source: Field Survey, (2024).

Table 1 presented the number of participants (n) = 169, and a correlation value (r) = 0.504 and P-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level = 0.05, the P-value is less than the alpha value, 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. By this, it means changes in the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory in schools can lead to also changes in effective communication among the Registrars in the same direction.

Hypothesis Two (Ho_2): There is no relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Table 2 gives the details as follows:

Table 2: Relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory	169	3.1653	.7662				
				167	0.604	0.000	Rejected
Effective Communication among the Registrars	169	3.0520	.5456				

Source: Field Survey, (2024).

Table 2 exhibited the number of participants (n) = 169, and a correlation value (r) = 0.604 and P-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level = 0.05 the P value is less than the alpha value, 0.000 < 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is

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rejected. This indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the registrars in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria. By this, it means changes in the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory in schools can lead to also changes in effective communication among the Registrars in the same direction.

Hypothesis Three (Ho_3)

There is no relationship between the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Table 3 gives the details as follows:

Table 3: Relationship between the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory	169	3.3250	.6069				
				167	0.543	0.000	Rejected
Effective communication among the Registrars	169	3.2640	.4456				

Source: Field Survey, (2024).

Table 3 exhibits the number of participants (n) = 169, and a correlation value (r) = 0.543 and P-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level = 0.05 the p value is less than the alpha value, 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. By this, it means changes in the application of Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory in schools can lead to also changes in effective communication among the Registrars in the same direction.

Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

1. There is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria.
2. There is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the registrars in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria.
3. There is a significant and positive relationship between the application of

Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory and effective communication among the Registrars in the State Universities in the North West of Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with that of Rochnia, Radisch, and Kastens (2023) who carried out a longitudinal study to examine the effects of research and practice emphasis on theory application and teaching quality. The findings demonstrated that, in the second phase, theory application and instruction qualities are improved by significant research and practice orientation. Also in line with this study is that of Amie-Ogan, and Brown (2024) which examined the relationship between the application of administrative theories and school administrators' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and found that there was significant relationship between the application of scientific, administrative and human relations theories and school administrators' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

It was also found that there is a significant and positive relationship between the application of Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory and effective communication among the registrars in the state universities in the North West of Nigeria. This finding aligns with that of Otache (2021) who investigated the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between TPB constructs (attitudes toward behavior [ATB], subjective norms [SN], and perceived behavioral control [PBC]) and hospitality management students' entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) and revealed a substantial positive relationship between ATB and PBC, with self-confidence playing a key role. The study also agreed with the findings of Amie-Ogan, and Brown (2024) which found that there was significant relationship between the application of scientific, administrative and human relations theories and school administrators' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The study established a significant and positive correlation between the application of Fiedler's Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among registrars in North West Nigerian state universities. The finding aligns with Balbuena et al.'s (2020) study, which demonstrated a strong connection between leadership behaviors and organizational productivity in Philippine higher education institutions. Also in line with this study is that of Rochnia, Radisch, and Kastens (2023) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the effects of research and practice emphasis on theory application and teaching quality. The findings demonstrated that, in the second phase, theory application and instruction qualities are improved by significant research and practice orientation.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between the application of theories and effective communication among registrars in state universities in the North West of Nigeria. The findings revealed significant and positive relationships between the application of Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory, Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory, and Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory and effective communication among registrars. By this, it means changes in the application of these theories in schools can lead to also changes in effective communication among the Registrars in the same direction.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **Promote the application of management theories:** Universities should encourage registrars to adopt and implement management theories, such as Blake and Moutons' Managerial grid theory, Tennanbau and Schmidt's Leadership Continuous Theory, and Fielders Contingency Leadership Theory, in their work.
2. **Foster effective communication:** Implement strategies to enhance communication skills among registrars, including training programmes, workshops, and regular feedback mechanisms.
3. **Create a supportive environment:** Establish a conducive work environment that encourages open communication, collaboration, and respect among registrars.
4. **Encourage continuous learning:** Promote a culture of continuous learning and professional development among registrars to ensure they stay updated on the latest administrative principles and communication techniques. By implementing these recommendations, state universities in the North West of Nigeria can improve the effectiveness of their registrars and enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

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