

**DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN THE  
NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR: A STUDY OF BELLS UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY, OTA AND CRAWFORD UNIVERSITY, IGBESA, OGUN STATE,  
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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the impact of Democratic Leadership style on employees' performance in selected private Universities in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study gathered data through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire circulated to three hundred and eighty (380) teaching staff of the selected universities. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to determine the sample size of the sample. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for the research instrument was 0.75, indicating a reliable instrument. Data collected was analyzed using Simple Linear Regression. The findings indicate that democratic leadership style has an impact on employees' performance in Nigerian private universities. The study recommends that the leaders should increase the level of democratic practice to spur employee performance in a greater rate. Also, the stakeholders of the private university should encourage the practice of democratic leadership style to further enhance employee performance.*

**Keywords: Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Employees' performance, Private Universities, University Administration.**

**Introduction**

Over the years, organizations have strived to ascertain the best leadership style that best influence employees' performance. This search has resulted in endless efforts by researchers to ascertain how leaders operate and the resulting effect on employees' performance. According to (Alghazo& Al-Anazi, 2016), Leadership plays a significant role in building

afervent environment and encouraging culture in an organization. Ngethe et al. (2012) argued that leadership roles and their styles contributes immensely to employees retention and performance. This perception is based on the fact that the pattern of leadership adopted can either motivate or demotivate the work force, which in return may increase or decrease workers productivity and tendency of retention in an organization. Thus, leadership is perceived to be personal trait which is reflected in an individual's potentials and actions. But sometimes, leadership is also associated with the role of managers or experts. This assertion may create some confusion because not all managers are leaders and conversely, not all leaders are managers. However, what is essential in this sense is that good leadership is identified by the level of performance of their employees (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, (2003). On this premise, Bennis, (2008) reiterated that a leader is someone who identifies the way, works through the way, and leads others to follow way.

The study is narrowed to the leadership of Bells University of Technology, Ota, and Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State (Principal Officers, Deans and Heads of Departments) who adopts democratic leadership method and how it impacts on the performance of their subordinates.

The leadership style adopted in managing any organization contributes to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Although much progress has been made in understanding leadership styles and their impact on employees' performance, much has not been known about in the impact of democratic leadership style on the performance of workers especially in the tertiary institutional in Nigeria. This is because the effect of leadership in organizational success cannot be over emphasized. A number of tertiary institutions are yet to actualize goals as a result of challenges associated with leadership methods adopted.

Apart from the intricacies of democratic leadership style, how management adopts the style to improve employees' performance in that organization is also a matter of inquiry. A good leadership style with the intention of an excellent employee performance will invariably turn the fortunes of an organization around. An ample understanding of democratic leadership style and the impact on employees' job performance is crucial in human capital development in the Nigerian tertiary institutions and this is a key factor in the determination of organizational success. Though, certain factors (economic, political and technological) may demand change in leadership styles. The continuous high performance of employees of tertiary institution workers is greatly determined by the leadership style adopted by the management. This is what this study seeks to discover.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. To investigate how democratic leadership is associated with employee's performance in Private Universities in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the impact of Democratic Leadership style on employees' performance in Private University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, these questions were modeled to guide the study:

- i. Is there any relationship between democratic leadership style and employees' performance in Private Universities in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. How does the staffs of private University perceive Democratic Leadership Style?
- ii. What is the impact of Democratic Leadership style on employees' performance in Private University, Ogun State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- HO<sub>1</sub>: Democratic Leadership style is not related with employees' performance in selected private institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria.
- HO<sub>2</sub>: Democratic Leadership style has no significant impact on employees' performance in private institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria.

### **Empirical Review**

A number of studies have been carried out on the impact of democratic leadership style on employees' performance using various methods. The research outcomes have supported that when leaders adopt the democratic leadership method in managing the affairs of the organization; workers are motivated leading to a rise in productivity. Below are the details: Ojokuku, Odetayo, and Sajuyigbe (2012) investigated the influence of leadership style on organizational performance in few banking sectors in Ibadan Nigeria. With a purposive sampling technique, the study selected sixty (60) respondents. The relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance was tested with Pearson product moment correlation while regression analysis was utilized to examine the impact of leadership styles on employees' performance. The study found that transformational and democratic leadership style ought to be adopted if the Bank management wishes to excel in the global financial market.

Iqbal, Anwar, and Haider (2015) in their study examined the effect of leadership styles on employees' performance. Using a qualitative approach, the study reviewed diverse scholarly articles to arrive at the effect the leadership styles (independent variable) on the employees' performance (dependent variable). The study concludes that participatory leadership (democratic leadership style) has a positive effect on employees' performance and can be more useful in long run. The study recommends that democratic leadership style should be applied in Al-Ghazi tractor factory to further empower employees and build team membership as well as to improve the potentials of workers.

Lumbasi, K'Aol, and Ouma, (2016) in their research conducted in Kenya, found that applying a participatory leadership approach will have a significant effect on the performance of workers of companies that won year COYA Award between 2010 and 2013 in Kenya. The researchers had studied the influence of participative leadership method on the performance of COYA senior managers in Kenya. They conclude that many of the respondents acknowledged that leaders are trusted and more valued when employees are involved in decision making process and that leads to high employee performance.

Kalu and Okpokwasili, (2018) examined the impact of democratic leadership style on job performance of employees in academic libraries in port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, using seventy four (74) professionals and para-professional staff. The study revealed that democratic leadership style has positive influence on subordinates' job performance and improvement in the overall productivity in academic libraries. The study also recommends that the management should ensure cordial relationship among workers.

Akpoviroro, Kadiri, and Owotutu, (2018) analyzed the impact of participatory leadership approach on the productivity of employees of Midland Galvanizing Product Limited Abeokuta, Ogun State Nigeria. In the Survey research, regression analysis was used to measure the effect of the independent on the dependent variable, while Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Findings of the study indicate a positive and significant relationship between democratic leadership style and employees' productivity. It recommends that organizations should adopt participatory (democratic) leadership style since as it boosts employee's morale and enhance organizational productivity.

Another study aims at revealing the impact of democratic leadership style on employees' performance was carried out by Dike and Madubueze, (2019). The qualitative research appraised democratic leadership style and how it affects organizational performance. The study emphasized that democratic leadership style allows managers to take the right decisions, participate with followers and delegate certain responsibilities to other employees. Using various leadership theories such as (Situational Concept Approach, Contingency Approach, Theory x and Theory y, the study revealed that democratic leadership induces high levels of trust between the leader and subordinated who, reciprocate by exhibiting high level of organizational performance.

Recently, in Indonesia, Mintari, Musnadi, and Abd. Majid,(2020) conducted a research on performance enhancement through improved participation (democratic) leadership. The study was aimed at measuring and analyzing the effect of participative (democratic) leadership style on employee's performance of the Kotaku institution in Indonesia. 140 staffs of Kotaku institution were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling method. The study found that employees' performance was positively affected by participatory leadership style, work engagement, and compensation package. This implies that any effort made towards improving organizational performance should be focused on the enhancing workers performance through participatory leadership, work commitment, and method of compensation.

Similar, Idahosa, and Nchuchuwe, (2000), examined participatory leadership in public organizations as a panacea to the ineffectiveness and inefficiency organizations. The study reviewed existing literatures and adopted eclectic approach to explain the need for employee participation in public organizations. The researchers enumerated certain benefits of participation in organizations and suggested different methods (consultation and democracy, opinion pool with suggestion boxes, advisory board, unionism and management by objectives) that support the concept. The study concludes that employee participation remains a prerequisite for goal attainment in public service.

## Research Methodology

A survey design was adopted as the research design and the choice of the design was informed by the objectives of the study. The appropriateness of survey research design was premised on the need to collect information from the predefined groups and its effectiveness in describing specific aspects of a given population.

The unit of analysis (entity being studied) in the study is two selected private universities in Ogun State. Thereby, the population of the study comprised of three hundred and eighty (380) teaching staff of Bells University of Technology, Ota and Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to determine the sample size. The sampling technique is appropriate in the current study because of the heterogeneous population of the study. Using 50% of the population from each university, the sample size is 190 teaching staff.

Descriptive statistics (Frequency, simple percentage, and Grand mean) and Inferential statistics (Simple Linear Regression) were adopted as data analysis techniques. While descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographics information of the respondents and to achieve research objective one, the inferential statistic was used to achieve research objective two. The research hypothesis formulated was tested at a 5% level of significance. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 was employed to carry out the data analysis.

## Results

Out of the 190 questionnaires administered to the teaching staff of the both Bells University of Technology, Ota and Crawford University, Igbesa, 165 questionnaires representing 0.868 (87%) were retrieved. The high response rate was achievable through the researcher's follow-up and drive.

### Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

The demographic information of the respondents was analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequency and simple percentage) and the result is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Information**

SN	Variables	Constructs	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of the Respondents		Male	93	56.4
		Female	72	43.6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>
Educational Qualifications		OND/HND	30	18.2
		BSc	43	26.1
		MSc/MBA	64	38.8
		Professional	28	17.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>
Designation of the Respondents		Teaching	165	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>
Working Experience		1 -5years	39	23.6

6 – 10years	84	50.9
11 – 15years	24	14.5
16 and Above	18	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021)

Table 2 details the results of the demographic information of the respondents. Out of the 165 respondents, 93 representing 56.4 percent of them were male and 72 representing 43.6 percent were female. By inference, the sample size consists of more males teaching staff than females. The educational qualification revealed that 30 respondents representing 18.2 percent had OND/HND qualification. While 43 respondents representing 26.1 percent had BSc qualifications, 64 of them representing 38.8 percent had MSc/MBA qualification, and 28 of them representing 17.0 had a professional qualification. In the aggregate, the majority of the respondents had attained MSc/MBA educational level. The level of education of the respondents is a premise for understanding democratic leadership style and giving useful information as required.

The analysis on the designation of the respondents indicated that all the respondents representing 100 percent were teaching staff. With the class of staff in the study, they are endowed both theoretically and practically qualify to give valid information on their perception of democratic leadership in academic settings.

Lastly in this section, working experience distribution indicated that 39 of the respondents representing 23.6 had working experience between 1 – 5years, 84 of them representing 50.9 percent had working experience between 6 -10years. Further, 24 of the respondents representing 14.5 percent had a working experience between 11 – 15years, and 18 of them representing 10.9 percent had working experience between 16years and above. Deductively, the majority of the respondents representing 50 percent had a working experience of 6 - 10years. With the level of working experience, the respondents are eligible to give valid information on their perception of democratic leadership and its impact on employee performance.

### **Perceptions of Democratic Leadership Style**

The first objective of the paper was to examine the extent to which the staffs of the selected university perceive democratic leadership style. To achieve the objective, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and grand mean) were applied to analyze the responses. Table 3 shows the analysis in detail.

The decision rule for the rating of the mean value was that any statements whose mean item score falls 0.0 - 1.0 is regarded as "Not aware at all/Absolutely inappropriate/Not effective at all; 1.01 – 1.99 as "Slightly aware/Inappropriate/Slightly effective"; 2.00 – 2.99 as "Moderately aware/Somewhat appropriate/Somewhat effective"; while 3.00 – 3.99 regarded as "Very aware/Appropriate/Very effective", 4.00 – 5.00 regarded as "Extremely aware/Absolutely Appropriate/Extremely effective" as applicable to each statement. And the grand mean was used to factor out the mean responses on all the statements.

**Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Perception**

Statements	N	Mean
What is the level of your awareness of democratic leadership style/practices in your institution	165	3.53
To what extent democratic leadership style/practice is appropriate in the higher institution	165	3.81
To what extent democratic leadership practices are effective in your institution	165	3.75
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.70</b>

Source: Researcher's (2021)

From Table 3, the result indicated that statements on "the level of your awareness of democratic leadership style/practices in your institution" had a mean value of 3.53. This implies that the respondents were very aware of democratic leadership in their institutions. The second statement on "what the extent democratic leadership style/practice is appropriate in the higher institution" had a mean value of 3.81. By inference, the respondents revealed that democratic leadership is absolutely appropriate in higher institutions.

Statement on "what the extent democratic leadership practices are effective in your institution", with a mean value of 3.75 and indicated that the respondents believed that democratic leadership is very effective in higher institutions.

Using the grand mean to sum the responses on the statements, the grand mean of 3.70 indicated that the respondents were very aware of democratic leadership, perceived it as appropriate and very effective in higher institutions.

### Hypothesis Testing

The second research objective of the paper was to examine the impact of democratic leadership style on employees' performance in higher institutions. To achieve the objective, a research hypothesis was formulated and tested at a 5% level of significance. The hypothesis was investigated using Simple Linear Regression (SLR). The regression outputs are presented in Table 4 and Table 5 as follows;

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.936 <sup>a</sup>	.876	.876	.439
a. Predictors: (Constant), Democratic Leadership				

Source: Researcher's (2021)

Table 4 depicted the model summary of the simple linear regression and the value of  $R^2$  is .876 (88%). This implied that 88% variation in employee performance in the higher institution is

explained by democratic leadership style, and the remaining 12% variation in employee performance was explained by other factors not considered in the study.

**Table 5: Coefficients of the Parameters**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.700	.092		7.609	.000
	Democratic Leadership	.790	.023	.936	33.980	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Researcher's (2021)

As indicated in Table 5, the constant coefficient is positive and significant at 1% level of significant ( $\beta_0 = .700$ ;  $t = 7.609$ ;  $P = .000$ ). The results imply that the expected value of employee performance in higher institutions when the democratic leadership is set to zero is positive and significant. Aside from the democratic leadership style, there are other factors expected to have positive and significant effects on employee performance.

Further, the parameter of democratic leadership is positive and significant at 1% level of significance ( $\beta_0 = .790$ ;  $t = 33.980$ ;  $P = .000$ ). By inference, the result indicated that a unit increase in the practice and level of democratic leadership leads to an increase in the level of employee performance in higher institutions.

### Decision

The result of the research hypothesis ( $\beta_0 = .790$ ;  $t = 33.980$ ;  $P = .000$ ) revealed that the null hypothesis that democratic leadership style has no impact on employee performance could not be accepted since the  $P$  -value less than 1% significant level. By rejecting the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis, it can be concluded that the democratic leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in private higher institutions.

The findings from the hypothesis supported the perception of the staff on democratic leadership style as the staff of the private universities reiterated that democratic leadership style is appropriate and very effective in higher institutions

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the democratic leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in private higher institutions. The findings of the study commensurate with the previous studies by Kalu and Okpokwasili (2018); AKpoviroro, Kadiri, and Owotutu (2018), Dike and Madubueze (2019).

Kalu and Okpokwasili, (2018) revealed that the democratic leadership style in academic libraries has a positive influence on subordinates' job performance because it results in high employee productivity. Also, Akpoviroro, Kadiri, and Owotutu, (2018) research findings



indicated a positive and significant relationship between participating (democratic) leadership style and employees' productivity. Lastly, Dike and Madubueze, (2019) in their study revealed that democratic leadership induces high levels of trust between the leader and subordinated who, reciprocate by exhibiting a high level of organizational performance.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research examined the impact of democratic style on employees' performance with a focus on private institution operators in Nigeria. The study examined the extent to which the staffs of privates' university perceive democratic leadership style; examined the impact of Democratic Leadership style on employees' performance in privates' university in Nigeria. The study concluded that that the staff of the selected private universities were very aware of democratic leadership, perceived it as appropriate and very effective in higher institutions. The study also concluded that democratic leadership style has an impact on employee performance in a private institution.

Arising from the conclusion and findings of the study, it was recommended that the leaders should increase the level of democratic practice to spur employee performance in a greater rate. Also, the stakeholders of the private university should encourage the practice of democratic leadership style to further enhance employee performance.

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