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TASK-ORIENTED VERSUS RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP STYLES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE NIGERIAN WORK ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

One of the most prominent typifications of leadership styles is the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership styles comparison. This study seeks to understand people's views on which of these alternative leadership styles is considered more appropriate and more common in the Nigerian work environment. It was expected from the onset that most people would pick a combination of the two. The paper therefore seeks to find out which style organisational leaders actually use most often in Nigeria in practice, and why, thus comparing belief with practice. One is also interested in finding out the role that environmental culture plays in leadership style and organizational behaviour, as perceived by respondents. qualitative research method was used, which involved administering open-ended questionnaires to key organisational leaders and managers in the corporate and academic environments. As hypothesized, it was found out that while people advocate a fair combination of the two, tilting to one side or the other as the situation would demand, respondents feel that most Nigerians actually use the task-oriented approach because of prevailing Nigerian work culture. This calls for major reorientation and adaptation in the application of prevailing theories in organisational and management behaviours in the African environment, with the development of appropriate corporate culture and human development strategies that will enhance Africa's overall development.

Keywords: Leadership, Tasks, Relationship, Organisations, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Leadership and organisational culture have been in the center of attention for the last couple of decades, mostly because of their strong relationship with organisational performance. Popa (2012) rightly notes that, while in the past the emphasis in organisational analysis was placed on financial performance, nowadays, nonfinancial indices such as customer satisfaction, staff engagement and effective leadership are used more often to evaluate organisational performance. The current emphasis is that if an organisation wants to improve its performance, the leadership style should be largely analyzed and adapted to new organisational, business and environmental requirements. Business leaders around the world have become increasingly aware of the fact that an effective leadership style is more important than ever in the workplace. The wrong and inappropriate leadership style can lead to a lot of problems, including: weak motivation, low productivity, ineffective team work, and high employee turnover. Leadership has been said to be perhaps the most critical success factor for organisational productivity and sustenance over time. Hence, Harper (2012) rightly submits that leaders, specifically those that are effective, are key asset that distinguishes a company from its competitors. In the same vein, Ruggieri (2013) avers that right leadership style and effective leadership are of immense importance because of the impact that leaders exert on follower's attitude, behaviour and performance.

There are various typifications of leadership styles; the autocratic, democratic, laissesfaire style in terms of the degree of participation and autonomy allowed; transactional and transformational leadership style in terms of the extent the leader focuses on stabilizing and sustaining status quo or contrarily encourages innovation and change in both the employees and the organisation; and the task-oriented or relationship (or people) - oriented style, in terms of the extent to which the leader focuses either on the tasks to be done as an end in itself, or contrarily encourages employee engagement, welfare and relationship building in the pursuit of organisational goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Most existing works on leadership styles are based on experiences in Western countries, as is the case with other aspects of organizational behaviour and corporate practices. Works done in occidental cultures abound in respect of leadership styles in general, and task-oriented versus relationship-oriented leadership styles in particular. Bass (1990) refers to task-oriented leadership style, which he calls 'initiating structure' as a style in which the leader focuses extensively on goal achievement, and establishes well-defined patterns of communication. On the other hand, in relationship-oriented leadership, which he calls 'consideration', the leader gives strong emphasis to showing concern and respect for their followers, looking out for their welfare, expressing appreciation and providing emotional support.

According to Anzalone (2017), a task-oriented leader is one who focuses on the task or series of tasks at hand, as well as all procedures necessary to achieve the task. A task-oriented leader is less concerned with the idea of catering for employees' personal needs, and more concerned with finding technical, step-by-step solutions for meeting specific goals. Anzaloneavers that a task-oriented leader might ask "What steps can we take to meet our quarterly financial goals?", as opposed to asking "How can we build the kind of employee productivity that brings about success within the company?" Anzalone notes that task-oriented leadership style has many benefits. A task-oriented leader is highly logical and analytical, and has a strong understanding of how to get the job done by focusing on the necessary workplace procedures. A task-oriented leader understands that a major task can involve numerous smaller tasks; consequently, the leader delegates work accordingly in order to ensure that everything gets done in a timely and productive manner. The leader seeks to ensure that deadlines are met and jobs are completed, and this approach is considered especially useful for team members who don't manage their time well. Bass (1990) however submits that, because taskoriented leaders don't tend to think much about their team's well-being, this approach can suffer many of the flaws of autocratic leadership, including causing motivation and retention problems.

According to Larman (2015), a relationship-oriented leader understands the importance of tasks, but also places a tremendous amount of time and focus on meeting the needs of everyone involved in the assignment. This may involve offering incentives like bonuses, providing mediation to deal with workplace or classroom conflicts, spending individual time with employees to learn their strengths and weaknesses, offering above-average financial compensation, or just leading in a personable or encouraging manner. Anzalone(2017) posits that a people-oriented leader focuses on creating overall success by building lasting relationships with employees. This type of leader does care about tasks and schedules, but he/she believes that work culture is more important. A people-oriented leader uses relationship building techniques, such as employee recognition and team-building exercises, to create an environment where employees feel appreciated and motivated enough to invest personally in the success of the business and work at their highest possible levels.

Friedman (2013) looks at the pros and cons of both approaches. He notes that a taskoriented leader has several characteristics that help make sure that things get done in a manner that is both proficient and timely. These managers usually create clear, easy-to-follow work schedules with specific requirements and deadlines. The pros of this leadership style are that it maintains high standards with optimal efficiency. Employees who need structure and who

struggle with managing their time would work best under this kind of task-oriented leadership, because it's more organized and is deadline driven. In Friedman's view, the negatives of taskoriented leadership are that it can lead to a lack of employee autonomy and creativity, which can result in low morale in the office. When an employee has to work under very strict deadlines and excessive task orientation, it can bring the company culture down. Employees who are self-motivated tend to rebel in this type of environment. The lack of creativity under excessively task-oriented management can have a negative effect on a company's products as well, since it tends to deaden innovation. When a manager is too task-oriented, the weaknesses of this leadership style can sometimes outweigh the positives.

To Friedman (2013), a people-oriented management style tends to energize employees because it makes them feel appreciated for the work they do. One of the biggest benefits of people-oriented management is that the focus on employee relationships makes employees feel that they make a difference in the company. And better, more effective efforts come from people who feel that they're a part of a company's success. Friedman however notes that peopleoriented leadership comes with a number of challenges. Sometimes employees may feel that the responsibilities they've been given are overwhelming, and they may need more direction. Ineffective decisions may result if the focus is consistently put on manager/employee relationships, rather than the important business decisions that need to be made. In the same vein, Griffin & Ebert (2010) note that the downside of relationship-oriented leadership is that, if taken too far, the development of team chemistry may detract from the actual tasks and goals at hand. Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies (2004) found that, in terms of the relative effectiveness of both styles, relationship-oriented leadership, otherwise called 'consideration' had a stronger effect on follower satisfaction (job and leader satisfaction, and motivation) whereas task-oriented style structure had a slightly stronger effect on leader performance.

Taberno, Chambel, Curral & Arana (2009) conducted a study among final year Psychology students in a Spanish University, concerning the role played by the perceived taskoriented or relationship-oriented leadership style, in relation to the development of interactive normative contract and group performance. Normative contract refers to individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding the terms of exchange between individuals and their organisation. It represents employees' perceptions of what compensation, resources, and attitudes can be expected from the organisation and its leadership in return for fulfilling their perceived obligations (Rousseau, 1995). Taberno, Chambel, Curral & Arana (2009) found that: task-oriented leaders induced greater group efficacy, a more positive and less negative affective state among members of the group, whereas more relationship-oriented leaders did not bring significant differences in relation to group processes. Groups who perceived their leaders as

more task-oriented were also found to have achieved higher levels of task accomplishment. Taberno, Chambel, Curral & Arana (2009) however cautioned that the strength of task-oriented style should not be overstated, that leaders who focus on relationships set more long-term objectives and for this reason alone they have an effect on long-term emergent states, whereas task-oriented leaders will have an effect on task performance in the shorter term. They further submitted that relationship-oriented leadership will generate greater cohesion within groups, as well as greater team learning. They suggested that it would be very useful to conduct longitudinal research which would enable the effects of different leadership styles to be analyzed over time, as well as their effect in relation to different types of tasks which have higher or lower degrees of structure. Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha (2007) argue that a leadership style which focuses on task achievement is linked with better performance, whereas Sahertian & Soetjipto (2011) averred that relationship-oriented leadership has stronger individual impact, and a positive effect on self-efficacy.

Johannsen (2017) notes that, in the 1950s, management theorists from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan published a series of studies to determine whether leaders should be more task- or relationship-oriented. The research concluded that there is no single "best" style of leadership, and thus led to the creation of the situational or contingency leadership theory, which essentially argues that while leaders should engage in a healthy dose of both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership, they would tilt to one side of the divide than the other, depending on the situation at hand in that organisation. The factors that will determine which style will be more appropriate at any point in time would include: the nature of leader-member relations already built, the structure of the task at hand and the leader's position power or weight of authority.

While the contingency or situational approach started to lead us in the direction of realizing that there would be no case of 'one model fits all' in leadership style and that which style would be most appropriate will depend on various factors on ground, only few works have given due consideration to the cultural/environmental factor in determining the prevalence and appropriateness of a leadership style in an organisation. As Nwagbara (2011) asseverates, Africa has suffered a tormented history that follows a shadow of colonialism, conquest, neocolonialism, global capitalism and foisting of Western organisational and leadership practices upon her. Thus, Adeleye (2011) and Ngugi (2009) have submitted that, in the context of cultural relativism, it is neither appropriate nor useful for African organisations to copy Western-oriented organisational models, and that Africa's disempowerment in the global community and her lack of organisational advancement are the results of the continent's capacity to think from within.

The replication of Western management and leadership models in non-Western environments has been a contested issue in management science for a long time (Hickson, 1974; Montgomery, 1985; Ahiauzu, 1999; Jackson, 2004). Studies have demonstrated that Western culture is different from Africa's way of life. Culture is an integral component of organisational management, and should therefore be considered most relevant in the process of Africa's organisational evolution. Other authors from the African continent have also noted that, in the competitive world of international business, understanding cultural similarities and differences can bean important factor to management success (Kagari, 2011; Matondo, 2012; Manyak & Mujtaba, 2013). Culture is important because knowing basic values tends to make individual behaviour more predictable (Kagaari, 2011). Understanding how others perceive and value their environment also provides a guide for managers to anticipate behaviours and respond effectively (Alkailani, Azzam & Athamneh, 2012). Thus, the need to appreciate cultural differences is becoming increasingly important as globalization brings disparate people into closer contact.

Manyak & Mujtaba (2013) carried out a study to compare task- and relationshiporientations of Ugandan and American managers. While this is one of the few empirical studies in Africa on this specific subjects, their conclusion was that Ugandans workers are comfortable with both the task-oriented leader and the relationship-oriented leader, thus painting a glowing image of the Ugandan work environment and work culture. According to them, an American Manager assigned to work in a Ugandan organisation might find some commonality with their Ugandan associates because both have seemingly similar leadership orientations. Respondents from both cultures are said to score "high" in relationship orientation and "moderately high" to "high" in task orientations on the Northouse scales. However, Manyak and Mujtaba (2013) submit that this surface similarity may hide subtle but statistically significant differences that could lead to misunderstandings in the workplace. The first key difference which they pinpoint is that Ugandans score significantly higher in both task and relationship orientations than do Americans, and that the explanation for this finding, while highly speculative, might be found in the dual nature of Ugandan society. The hierarchical decision-making structure of traditional tribal and village society was reinforced by colonial administrative structure that supported taskoriented behaviour. Orders are given to subordinates and little attention is shown to such concerns as empowerment. Conversely, they believe that the high-context culture of Uganda moderates task-driven behaviour by suppressing feelings of impatience and devoting the time necessary to establish personal and social relationships. Ugandans may well be more sensitive than American managers due to the circumstances that surround social exchanges.

Manyak and Mujtaba (2013) caution that a typical American manager assigned to work in a country like Uganda would most likely assume that employees in such a high-context culture are more relationship-oriented than American workers due to their societal conditioning. The implication is that the American manager may presume that a high relationship orientation may cause Ugandan employees to be less focused on completing their tasks in a timely manner, that such employees may not be assertive enough to pressure their peers toward working faster when there is a backlog, and that they may even resist asking for help when necessary because they do not want to appear "pushy" or "rude." This research suggests that reality may be quite different. Manyak and Mujtaba (2013) conclude that, while Ugandans do appear more relationship-oriented than their American counterparts, their task orientations are also significantly higher than those of Americans, and that managers and supervisors should feel comfortable in knowing that Ugandan workers, with proper leadership, will be task-oriented while maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. While the findings of Manyak and Mujtaba are interesting and informative, it might be necessary to take a more critical look at their methodology and approach (which is not the concern of the present study), to ensure that a subtle spirit of patriotism did not affect their study and its conclusions.

In summarizing this review of literature and linking it with this study, the present study proceeds from the premise that, as is evident in the review of literature undertaken here, most existing works on the present subject are based on experiences in the Western Countries; their conclusions cannot be taken for granted or assumed to be automatically applicable in the Nigerian situation. Only few empirical works have been done on seeking to understand the task orientation and relationship orientation of African leaders. While the study of Manyak & Mujtaba (2013) is one of such few works, their conclusion appears too bright and positive concerning the Ugandan work environment and culture that it may not be applicable to the Nigerian environment. This supports the position of Jackson (2004) that a confounding factor in the adaptation and application of Western theories in Africa is that the African context cannot be seen simply as one uniformed culture such that once discovered, leadership styles can then be suitably adapted. The African context is one of cross-cultural interactions at various levels.

Hence, this study seeks to test the applicability of the various propositions of the existing literatures reviewed here to the Nigerian work environment. The key questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- Are Nigerians more disposed to task-oriented leadership style or relationship-oriented leadership style, or a fair combination of both?
- Is it likely that respondents will favour a fair combination of both, in theory, but be more disposed to one or the other in practice?

- Will most leaders favour a contingency approach, in which the style used will depend on the situation, in terms of nature of task at hand, competency level of workers vis-à-vis the leader, and environmental culture?
- How do leaders rate the relative effectiveness of each leadership style, in the short-run and in the long-run?
- What is the role of environmental factor and culture in organizational behaviour and leadership style, in the organisation's strife towards excellence in performance?

The two main hypotheses on which this work is based are:

H1: Organisational leaders in Nigeria favour a combination of task-oriented leadership style and relationship-oriented leadership style, but in practice would tilt more to one end than the other H2: Environmental culture explains why most leaders in Nigeria would favour task-oriented leadership style in actual practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this paper was a largely qualitative approach, with some quantitative touch. We selected few key organizational leaders in various sectors, who were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire, through which they were required to express their views and opinion in details on the subject of study. This was complemented with oral interviews, where some clarifications were required. As Crossman (2017) has rightly noted, while the qualitative methodology is not primarily concerned about correlations and multivariate analysis of a large population, it creates an in-depth understanding of the attitudes, behaviours, interactions, events, and social processes that compose everyday life. In doing so, it helps social scientists understand how everyday life is influenced by society-wide factors such as social structure, culture and other social forces, thus deepening understanding and establishing stronger foundations for the positions held and the conclusions reached.

There is however a touch of quantitative analysis, within the small sample size used for this study. A simple count was conducted to observe the frequency of each line of views and opinion, and to see if the trend of views correlate with any of the background variables. The purposive sampling method was used; the sample size consisted of 25 top level executives and top/middle management staff in various sectors of the economy. The sample consisted of 1 Vice-Chancellor of a private University, 1 Registrar of a private University, 1 Executive (Managing) Director of a private school (primary & secondary school), and 5 Managing Directors of corporate organisations. Other respondents included: a Professor and Dean in a Public University, heads of department in a private University and top-level managers in corporate organisations of different sizes. Other background information of the study sample is presented in the Table below.

Table 1. Background Information of Respondents

Nature of Organisation		No of Staff In Organisation		Grade Level		Years of Work		Gender		Age	
						Experien					
Oil & Gas	3	Below 20	5	CEOs/Vice	7	5 Yrs &	1	Male	13	25-39	7
				Chancellor		Below				Yrs	
University	6	20-99	11	Directors,	8	6-10 Yrs	2	Female	12	40-49	8
				Dean of Faculty,						Yrs	
				Executive Mgt							
Directors,	2	100-249	1	Heads of Dept	1	11-15 Yrs	2			50 Yrs&	10
Secondary				Senior Mgt	0					Above	
School				Middle Mgt							
ΙΤ	3	250 &	8			16-20 Yrs	8				
		above									
Finance	1					21 Yrs&	12				
						Above					
Real Estate	2										
Consulting	5										
Public	1										
Service											
Maritime	1										
TOTAL	25		25		2		23		25		25
					5						

The open-ended questions posed to the respondents were intended to address the research objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following were the key questions, to which the study subjects were required to respond in details, and a summary of their responses to each question.

Question - How important is leadership style to organisational, departmental or unit performance?

As expected, all the 25 respondents recognised and stressed the importance of leadership in general, and the style of leadership in particular, as a key determinant of organisational, departmental and unit performance. The following are some of the specific explanations given by respondents to stress the significance of leadership and leadership styles in the performance and growth of an organisation.

"Leadership style is very critical to organisational performance because the level of performance of employees depends not only on their skills but also on the level of motivation each person exhibits. Motivation is the inner drive or external inducement to behave in a particular way, which is the way of rewards; such motivation is determined by the type of leadership style".

"Leadership style is of the uttermost importance in determining how your team will perform. Your leadership style will set the tone, direct and motivate/demotivate (as the case may be) your team members."

"Style of leadership is important as the right fit between leadership and employee performance must be present to meet the desired objectives of the organisation. As organisations evolve, often changes or adjustments are needed to maintain this right fit".

"Leadership provides the strategic direction for organisations. Leadership must have a firm understanding of organisational vision and strategies. Performance is thus a function of the competence of leadership at communicating the organisational strategy. Leadership drives performance by endearing the workforce to organisational goals, when the leadership style is right".

"Since leadership is a process, which involves influencing others to work towards the achievement of the aims and objectives of the organisation, leadership is important in order to effect changes that will help the organisation achieve its set objectives. Good leadership is not about power or force, it is about influence. As a transformational leader, influencing followers for excellent performance is highly important"

"Leadership is an essential component for effective management in an organisation, department or unit. It goes beyond authority. It has the potential to influence a group's efforts towards accomplishing goals. Therefore, the leadership style has the potential to drive the efforts of an organisation in the right or wrong direction".

"Leadership style is very important to unit performance in the sense that if a leader does not lead well, those under him are bound to follow in his negative direction, which will lead to a complete failure in the performance of the department".

"I believe that everything that happens in an organisation in terms of staff performance and organisational productivity depends on the leadership of the organisation and the leadership style. If the adopted leadership style is wrong, the organisation's staff tend to dance along that wrong direction".

"Leadership in organisation defines the direction, the core ideology, the organisation's character that will remain with the organisation throughout its existence. It determines how far the organisation will achieve its corporate and overall objectives. Organisation leadership provides a sort of glue that holds the organisation together as it strives to meet its goals. The influence the leadership provides is therefore imperative in determining whether an organisation will survive in the pluralistic environment it operates in, as the leadership provides the necessary guidance and inspiration needed to grow the business. Successful organisations who have stood the tests of time, such as Hewett Parker, Procter & Gamble, do have solid leadership structure in place which pilots the organisation to its destinations, thus helping them to carve an enviable brand for themselves in their various industries".

"Leadership sets the pace for any organisation, team or group. The style of leadership practiced by the spearheading member of an organisation determines the productivity and the overall climate in that organisation. The leader typically holds the vision or the objectives aimed at by the group, and his/her ability to carry the group appropriately determines whether the set goals will be achieved".

Question - We are looking at task-oriented leadership style and relationship-oriented leadership style. Which of these do you consider generally more effective for organisational performance in the Nigerian work environment? Please provide explanation for your answer.

Of the 25 respondents, 10 (40%) opined that task-oriented leadership style will be the more effective style in the Nigerian workplace. Some of the explanations provided in this respect are as follow:

"Task oriented leadership style is considered more effective, because the Nigerian environment is already "highly typified" with relationships to the detriment of completing tasks. People often start with stories about themselves rather than focusing on what needs to be achieved".

"A blend of the two styles would have been the best, depending on the work situation/individual staff. However, the relational/paternalistic leadership style has more demerits, particularly in terms of decrease in productivity, given our cultural sentiments which could lead to taking leaders for granted, and causing envy & negativity. Many staff cannot draw the line between what needs to be achieved and relationship. Hence the preference for taskoriented style".

"Task-oriented leadership style appears more effective. Private sector businesses are target driven. The public sector work culture, where I work, is generally laid-back, with people having entitlement mentality, and not exerting themselves on the job. Therefore, task-oriented style is preferred".

"Task-oriented leadership style is more effective in the Nigerian work environment. A leader must design his/her goals within the organisation's mission and vision, and drive followership towards the realization of such goals within the stipulated time. An average Nigerian is indolent and is always more interested in rewards than assigned responsibilities. Relationship will be abused".

"I perceive the task-oriented leadership style more effective in the Nigerian work environment. The nature of our environment and culture assumes a more subservient approach to leading and managing people; because people are excessively submissive therefore, they tend to respond well to this style of leadership. Leaders and business owners are generally more interested and focused on getting work done and making profit; for this reason, they think task, task, task, without recourse to the other side of the people and their needs. Nevertheless more organisations (especially the highly structured, blue-chip ones) are getting more aware of the benefits of people-oriented leadership style and are gradually promoting it".

"Task-oriented leadership style is more effective in the Nigerian work environment. It is better to have task-oriented leader who is a little less warm and supportive of subordinates than a leader who is very warm and supportive but cannot set goals and manage tasks to achieve the set goals"

"I consider the task-oriented leadership style more effective in Nigeria. This is because of the low quality of the workforce who often apply sentiments and other elements of their native culture in the workplace. This can stand in the way of getting the job done".

6 (24%) were of the view that relationship-oriented leadership style would be more effective in the Nigerian environment. Some of the lucid explanations provided by a few of them are as follow:

"It depends on the nature of business. I have worked all my life in service organisations and I can say that relationship-oriented leadership produces better performance than taskoriented style in organisations. With relationship-inclined leadership, the employees have an ownership mentality and will willingly go the extra mile. The rate of staff turnover is low in such organisations and fraud is also low".

I have worked in various sectors of our society - the civil service, banking and now as an entrepreneur, and in all these sectors, I have always applied the relationship-oriented type of leadership and it has always worked tremendously for me. I have discovered that workers are

the same everywhere, whether in the public or private sector; none of them wants to be treated as a robot or a machine that does not have feelings or emotions. Every one of them always desires to be treated and related with as a human being. I personally have always gotten more task accomplished most times applying the relationship-oriented type of leadership compared to some of my colleagues that are task-oriented in their leadership style".

"A relationship-oriented leadership style, if properly implemented can be more effective in the Nigerian work environment. This, of course, also depends on the nature of the job; however, since this style of leadership places value on the employees, involving them in the ground work of the organisation, incorporating their ideas and basically giving them a sense of ownership, the likely result will be better performance and accountability in the place of work".

The remaining 9 (36%) submitted that a combination of both style would be most appropriate in Nigerian, depending on the situation on ground. They submit that such situation would include, among others, the nature of work and the level and skills of workers being supervised. Some of them provide the following explanations, in elucidating their view.

"The particular style to use will depend on the type of team you have, your industry, and the type of work you do. I don't think one can necessarily say that one style is always more effective than the other".

"Both are necessary - depending on the organisation and more importantly on the nature of work. Nigerians being more informal naturally and culturally require the right balance of both leadership styles".

"A good combination of the two styles is considered important. If the leadership style is one sided, the overall organisational performance will be ineffective, because the need to accomplish common task is as important as the need to maintain cohesive social unity and happiness on the job.

"The complexity of the human race and the peculiarities associated with different generations make it difficult to adopt only one leadership style. An admixture of both will have to be applied. Task-oriented leadership style if applied in some circumstances will appear inhuman and present the leader as being out-of-touch with reality, while leaning too heavily towards the relationship-oriented leadership style may create room for an unbridled and lax work environment, making excellent performance impossible".

"Both leadership styles are extremely important in all work contexts around the world. They are not mutually exclusive".

From the language used by some of the respondents above, it is apparent that even while they advocate a combination of the two styles of leadership, their preference for one or the other could be discerned.

Respondents variously mentioned the situations where each style will be more appropriate. They largely believe that task-oriented style will be more appropriate in tasks where accuracy, precision, deadlines and targets are critical, or if one is dealing with unskilled employees, or where the job is basic, repetitive and does not require much initiative. They also submit that task-oriented leadership style is better in a work environment where staff lack the culture of discipline and motivation, and in a leadership-confident environment, rather than in an employee-confident environment. According to some of the respondents, other conditions that may warrant a task-orientation leadership approach are: emphasis on measuring individual productivity as against team-based performance measures, or for new hires who are yet to be integrated into the corporate culture of the organisation, or where the leader discerns that indiscipline and complacency have set in, despite all efforts to be relationship-oriented. Some opine that in leading project managers, architects and engineers who are involved in detailed projects involving precise, time-driven and target-driven tasks, the task-oriented leadership style will be more appropriate. Many of the respondents submit that relationship-oriented style is more appropriate, if your team is already highly motivated, if you are in an industry that requires creativity and innovation, if you are dealing with highly skilled and experienced staff, or if the work team is not under intense deadline pressure. A respondent describes the university environment as an 'employee-confident' environment, where a relationship-oriented leadership style will be more appropriate.

Respondents also variously outlined the benefits of each leadership style. They aver that the benefits of task-oriented leadership style include: quick response, removal of operational delays, meeting of deadlines and targets, all of which result in high productivity, and profitability (for business ventures). The benefits of relationship-oriented leadership style are said to include: high employee engagement in decision-making, team work, staff creativity and innovativeness, high morale, better staff loyalty, commitment and ownership of the work. Relationship-oriented leadership style is believed to make better room for empathy, job satisfaction, and low-labour turnover. All of this, it is argued, will enhance the organisation's capacity for continuity, high productivity, growth and profitability, particularly in the long run.

Despite all the outlined benefits of relationship-oriented leadership style, some respondents still insisted that the relationship-oriented style will not work in some cultural environments, including Nigeria's. Two of such views are as follows:

"The relationship-oriented leadership style only works when employees are responsive and responsible. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the Nigerian work environment".

"I have always engaged in the relationship-oriented leadership style, but unfortunately this has not worked for me, in producing the required result of high job-performance".

This leads us to the findings on the next issue that is interesting and critical for this study, relating to the perceived influence of the cultural environment in determining the appropriateness or otherwise of one style, against the other. The following question was posed to the respondents:

Question - What do you consider to be the importance of environmental culture (usually called the 'Nigerian factor') in employees' attitude and behaviour in the Nigerian society? How do you think this could affect or determine the approach or style used by the leader, in terms of task orientation and relationship orientation?

Most of the respondents believe that the cultural environment is a key determinant of the leadership style that will be used, that should be used and that will produce the desired result. Many argue that it is the nature of the Nigerian cultural environment that inform their preference for the task-oriented leadership style. Some of their instructive submissions are as follow:

"One of the greatest challenges and major cause of business failure in Nigeria is what has been termed the 'Nigerian factor'. Though this might sounds strange, it's almost impossible to run a successful business in Nigeria without the Nigerian factor setting in. The Nigerian factor doesn't really have a specific definition. If you are doing business in Nigeria or live in Nigeria, you would have heard the phrase "the Nigerian factor", a phrase that is synonymous with the bad factors that adversely affect job performance and success in business, which include such practices as lawlessness, laziness and corruption. This could greatly impact on the leadership style, causing many leaders to have preference for the task-oriented leadership style".

"I think the 'Nigerian factor' will depend on where in Nigeria a leader finds himself. Generally speaking in the professional environment where expectations are clearly spelt out and staff are enlightened, people tend to do what is asked of them with minimal fuss. However in the blue-collar sector, civil service, and SMEs, Nigerians tend to be easy-going, laid-back and lethargic; hence, a task oriented style would be the best".

"Local culture undergirds the work ethic of the people. This must be factored in when determining which leadership style is needed".

"The environmental factor invariably affects the confidence level of the employees as well as the leaders. If a leader is not politically well positioned, relationship orientation is the better choice. A leader operating in a 'strange land' has no choice but to go for relationship orientation. A leader operating in his/her sphere of social, ethnic and political influence can afford to go for task orientation and still record huge success, because he or she already has favourable acceptance among the followers".

"The Nigerian factor influences employees attitude &behaviour in diverse ways. Naturally, we are not a disciplined people. We lack the values of excellence and of being productivityinclined. So many employees lack a sense of vision and direction"

"The environmental culture largely affects employee attitude and behaviour, as people want more pay for less job. There's the get-rich-quick mentality, and people are generally lazy. The task-oriented style will work better in the Nigerian environment".

"This Nigerian factor is a horrible construct that needs to be clearly defined in functional terms. It is a pseudonym for "bad behaviour, cheating, despising meritocracy etc" and other "negative socially tolerated norms".

"The so-called Nigerian factor will not make relationship-oriented approach a good choice in the country. Once a leader chooses a task-oriented approach and is consistent with it, the employee has no choice but to either 'key into it' or 'key out of it' by being exited".

"Often, the experience in many organisations (particularly in the public service) is that leaders or managers tend to favour people of same language or ethnic background. And this in the long run adversely affects the productivity of the organisation. Usually, other employee will notice the discrepancies and discrimination, thus dampening their morale and commitment to the organisation".

"Environmental culture (the Nigerian factor) has affected employees' attitude and behaviour negatively in the workplace in our society. The culture of entitlement, little output for much reward, majoring in minor, talking too much on phone etc, combine to make Nigerian workers among the least productive globally. This is why task-oriented approach should be the major plank of engagement. However, people/relationship orientation should later become the 'icing on the cake', as the workers become more productive".

"Nigerians in general are not keen on pursuing lofty achievements in the workplace but are more interested in how much money is made. Many Nigerians would normally want to get paid without lifting a finger. Some ethnic groups would pray for people that they like, that God would help them to receive heavy pay for very little labour, as a sign of divine favour. Hence the insistence on getting job done is very important, through a task-oriented approach. In the Nigerian environment, the leader must be willing to apply the stick, while not forgetting to introduce the carrot as appropriate".

"The colloquially-named 'Nigerian Factor' concept usually depicts certain negative attitudes that some employees may exhibit in a Nigerian work environment, including lateness to work, over-familiarity with supervisors and a general lack of professionalism in the workplace; basically, it is a 'tolerate-me-as-I-am' kind of attitude". This attitude will most likely make an employer/leader to embrace the task-oriented style, which may sometimes appear authoritarian, because the leader finds it imperative to ensure that all units involved are performing as they should and not performing at a sub-optimal level. Such leader may also deem it important to clamp down on such employees with penalties for negative attitudes and behaviours to ensure that other employees do not exhibit such and that the work does not suffer".

What appears like a positive balancing of the largely negative direction of the influence of the Nigerian existential and work culture is provided by a respondent, who submits:

"The Nigerian culture especially with time and task management, can be effectively handled by the proactive manager. The culture only operates in an environment where it is allowed to fester. Again, the mix of the two styles speaks here. Being people oriented does not imply that one would allow staff to fail in deliverables and carry on without any sanction. Showing the right kind of example is critical to performing well in the Nigerian kind of environment".

Question - Which style is more often used in most Nigerian organisations and why?

14 (56%) opined that the task-oriented leadership style is the more common style in Nigerian work organisations; 5 (20%) submitted that relationship-oriented style is the more prevalent, while the remaining 6 (24%) believed it is a combination of the two, and that leaders tilt more to one side than the other, depending on the situation at hand.

Question - Which style do you use more often?

6 (24%) claim to use the task-oriented style more often; 12 (48%) claimed to use relationshiporiented style more often, while 7 (28%) submitted that they use a combination of the styles, and that whichever they use at any point in time depends on the situation on hand.

Finally, the paper seeks to find out if variables such as gender and age affect the direction of opinion of respondents, in terms of their preference of leadership style. With a total of 11 women and 14 men, the influence of gender appears minimal, as slightly higher percentage of women favour relationship-oriented leadership style. 4 (28.6%) of men favour task-oriented leadership style, as against 2(18.2%) for women. 6(42.9%) of men favour relationship-oriented leadership style, as against 6(54.5%) for women. 4(28.6%) of men favour a combination of both style, as against 3(27.2%) for women.

Similarly, the influence of age (which also relates to length of work experience) appears minimal in affecting the views of respondents, with a slightly higher percentage of the older respondents favouring task-orientation style, while a slightly higher percentage of the younger respondents favour relationship-orientation style. 3(27.2%) of the 11 respondents who are 50 years and above favour task-oriented leadership style, as against (21.4%) of the 14 respondents who are ages 25-49. 4(36.4%) of respondents of ages 50 years and above favour relationship-oriented leadership style, as against 8(57.2%) of respondents in ages 25-49. 4(36.4%) of respondents of ages 50 years and above favour both styles, as against 3(21.4%) of respondents in ages 25-49).

The small sample size of this predominantly qualitative study limits the weight and significance of the differences, which thus calls for further study, using a largely quantitative approach with a much larger sample size.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study, in which a largely qualitative approach is used, establish the fact that leadership in general and the leadership style used in particular, would have significant impact on employees' commitment and productivity, and organisational performance. Many of the respondents assert that both task-oriented and leadership-oriented leadership styles should be used in the work place, and that the situation would determine whether the leader tilts more towards one end than the other. According to respondents, the task-oriented leadership style will be more appropriate while relating with unskilled and junior staff, and where the nature of work is involves high precision, such as engineering works. They believe that the relationshiporiented will be more appropriate where the workers being led are experienced and highly skilled, or where the nature of work requires much creativity, initiative and independence of thoughts, as in the academia.

Most respondents give preponderant weight to environmental culture in determining which style will generally be more appropriate in a given society. They believe that taskoriented leadership style will generally be more appropriate in the Nigerian environment, because of the so-called 'Nigerian Factor', a terminology that summarizes all the negative mindset and cultural tendency of people in the Nigerian society, which is characterised by the inclination for big gains for little work, taking people (including soft and nice leaders) for granted, being laid back and lackadaisical as long as one is not the owner of the business, poor time management, giving excuses for failures, general indiscipline, and taking advantage of good people and taking them for granted. It is generally believed that these negative traits manifest when people are working for others, and that the story becomes very different if they are working in their privately-owned businesses, where one sees people showing commitment, dedication, frugality and discipline, when they become self-employed in their own private businesses. The story is also said to be often different, when Nigerians get to a developed, a sophisticated environment that makes no room for laxity but that promises good compensation and career development. Not only does a large number believe that the task-oriented style is the more appropriate style in the Nigerian environment because of the 'Nigerian factor', they also submit that it is actually the more popularly used style.

However, the tendency to see the relationship-oriented style as the better and more ideal style for long-term sustainability and growth of the organization could be discerned from the study. In this respect, while most respondents submit that the task-oriented style is used more often in Nigeria, the larger majority also aver that they use either the relationship-oriented style or a combination of both; they are thus reluctant to admit that they use the task-oriented leadership style, which they had admitted to be the more popular style in the Nigerian environment. Only few were willing to own up to the fact that they use the task-oriented style. Few of the respondents also maintain that though they have consistently used the relationshiporiented style, it does not seem to have been effective in terms of yielding positive results or the desired level of performance and productivity.

Gender and age seem to have some tendency of affecting the inclination towards one or the other of the two leadership styles, with men tending to favour the task-orientation a little more than women who tend to favour relationship-orientation. In the same vein, age seems to be a determinant of preferred leadership style, with the older generation tending to favour the task-oriented leadership style a little more than the younger generation, who tend to favour relationship-oriented style a little more. Not much weight could be given to this relational analysis, however. A definite conclusion cannot be reached in this respect, given the small size of the sample. A more elaborate multivariate analysis will be required, using a largely quantitative approach, to establish the relationship between such background factors as age and gender on the one hand, and the preferred leadership style on the other.

The two hypotheses the paper started with appear to have been largely confirmed. It was hypothesized that: H1: Organisational leaders in Nigeria favour a combination of taskoriented leadership style and relationship-oriented leadership style, but in practice would tilt more to one end than the other. And, H2: Environmental culture explains why most leaders in Nigeria would favour task-oriented leadership style in actual practice.

It is recommended that organisational practitioners should not just give up and live with the task-oriented leadership style, which is currently prevalent in Nigerian organisations, but which has been established not to be in the long run interest of organisations that seek to be going concerns for many years to come. It can also not be said that the prevalent task-oriented style has been effective or has yielded high productivity in the corporate sectors and in the public service in Nigeria, compared to the more developed Western countries. Consequently, rather than acquiesce to the current situation, just because of the prevailing environmental culture and so-called 'Nigerian factor', an elaborate and sustained effort should be put into

seeking to build the right attitude and workplace ethics in Nigeria, though this will only be successful if given serious strategic planning, great commitment, steadfastness and determination. It is also a process that will involve the understanding, commitment and input of all stakeholders at the private and public sectors and of all institutions in the society.

Most importantly, this study has substantiated the position already proposed by many African writers, notably that of Jackson (2004), that an understanding of the context of management in Africa should be integrated into a research framework, as a means of understanding different stakeholder perspectives, and that this may primarily be understood through an appreciation of the cross-cultural dynamics operating on organisational and management factors south of the Sahara. The study has also validated the position of Jackson (2004) that the African context referred to, cannot be seen simply as consisting of one uniform culture, such that once discovered, leadership styles can then be suitably adapted. The African context is one of cross-cultural interactions at various levels, as indicated by the differences between the findings Manyak and Mujtaba (2013) of the Ugandan work environment and the findings and conclusions of this paper on the Nigerian work environment.

The study confirms the view that the success of leadership styles and management principles are contingent on their cultural appropriateness in any particular societal context, and this must be given greater weight and consideration in academic curricular, research and practice. What Jackson (2004) calls 'Management by planned adaptation' should be given greater focus at the intellectual and practical realms in Africa, which points to the need not to adopt western management principles and techniques wholesale, in a simplistic manner, but to successfully adapt those principles and techniques to the various cultural environments and conditions in African societies, a process that will require a more rigorous academic study and great commitment in implementation, at the political and corporate terrains.

Finally, this study has thrown up opportunities for further works in various dimensions. It will be intellectually salutary to engage in a similar study, using a quantitative approach involving various statistical and multivariate analyses. As earlier mentioned in this paper, the present work is limited in the sense that the largely qualitative methodology used here, involving a very small sample, is not conducive for a clear discernment of how respondents' views on leadership styles could vary according to age, gender, grade level and other social variables, and which would lead to more widely valid conclusions for theory-building. Further studies in that direction would therefore be highly intellectually enhancing.

It is also hoped that this line of study will be carried out in other African nations, cultures and societies, to enable us see how the views of various populations could vary according to different environmental cultures in the content. It is only through such diverse transnational studies that the cross-cultural adaptation of existing organisational and management theories and practices in African societies, which authors such as Jackson (2004) had advocated for, can become an effective reality.

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