

Perceived Influence of Leadership on Sustainable Management Practices in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study of Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of leadership styles on the implementation and commitment to sustainable management practices at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, (Oyo. Using a descriptive survey methodology, data were collected the purposive random sampling technique to collect data from 20 selected lecturers through the Leadership and Sustainable Management Questionnaire.) in the Department of Educational management, Library and information science. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test and a 0.87 Cronbach alpha coefficient was obtained. Results indicated that effective leadership styles significantly encourage sustainable management practices (Mean = 3.00, SD = 0.734) and play a crucial role in promoting them (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.669), while there was disagreement about the role of inclusive leadership in promoting sustainable initiatives (Mean = 2.14, SD = 0.845). Participants agreed that effective leadership can overcome administrative challenges (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.648) and strongly support sustainability policies through sound decision-making (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.747). Additionally, leadership styles were found to influence commitment to sustainable management practices (Mean = 3.28, SD = 0.912) and the level of staff commitment (Mean = 3.26, SD = 0.736). The study underscores the importance of transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic decision-making in fostering a culture of sustainability while highlighting the need for greater engagement with staff and students in sustainable initiatives. Recommendations

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include increasing engagement in decision-making processes to foster commitment and innovation in sustainable management practices.

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Introduction

Leadership remains a vital element in any human organisation, serving as the soul of management and significantly influencing the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. In Nigerian public tertiary institutions, effective leadership is paramount due to these organisations' complex and multifaceted nature. Mohammed, Shittu and Lawal, (2020) believe that leadership in Nigerian universities is essential for delivering quality education, fostering research, and engaging in community service. These institutions are designed to produce high-level manpower and serve as centres of knowledge dissemination. However, Nigerian public tertiary institutions frequently experience leadership crises that can lead to disruptions such as school closures, affecting their primary functions. The effectiveness of these institutions heavily relies on the leadership styles adopted by their leaders, which range from traditional to modern approaches. Additionally, traditional leadership styles in Nigerian universities include autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, while modern styles encompass a broader spectrum, including transformational, transactional, servant, and adaptive leadership, among others. The leadership styles adopted can significantly impact the institution's ability to achieve its goals and maintain sustainability. For instance, autocratic leadership, characterised by centralised decision-making, can create a climate of fear and reduce participative dialogue, whereas democratic leadership fosters higher productivity and morale through collaborative decision-making. Modern leadership styles, such as transformational and servant leadership, emphasise change, motivation, and prioritising the needs of followers, contributing to more dynamic and resilient institutions. The governance of these institutions is structured around governing councils and boards, which are responsible for overarching policy

and administrative decisions, further highlighting the importance of effective leadership. Thus, the authors conclude that the success of Nigerian universities is intrinsically linked to the leadership styles and governance practices employed by their leaders.

Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi, and Mojeed-Sanni (2018) state that Nigeria's higher education sector has expanded significantly, driven by the liberalisation of the sector that has attracted wealthy individuals and corporate investors meeting the National Universities Commission (NUC) criteria. Meanwhile, effective leadership has become crucial in navigating associated challenges, coordinating teaching, research, and community service, and ensuring optimal use of resources for academic performance and sustainability. Prioritising good leadership to enhance university operations becomes vital. Despite extensive Western literature on leadership, there is limited understanding of its impact in Sub-Saharan African universities, particularly in Nigeria.

Gbarage (2020) notes that leadership styles significantly impact organisational effectiveness, employee job satisfaction, and overall productivity within these institutions. However, challenges such as poor leadership strategies, inadequate motivation, and policy implementation issues have plagued many universities, leading to discontent among staff and suboptimal organizational performance. Leaders must navigate these complexities to ensure universities not only meet their educational goals but also contribute meaningfully to societal development. Despite the recognition of leadership's importance in university settings, there are notable research gaps. First, there's a lack of comprehensive studies focusing on the specific leadership styles that effectively promote job satisfaction and high performance among university staff in Nigeria. Existing research often overlooks the unique socio-cultural context and challenges faced by Nigerian universities, necessitating more localised studies. Second, while transformational leadership is widely acknowledged as beneficial, its practical implementation and effectiveness in Nigerian universities remain underexplored. Furthermore Okoli, Nnabufe, Adani and Ugbo (2021), submit that there's a need for research that investigates the impact of leadership on faculty retention, as high turnover rates can destabilize academic programs

and hinder institutional progress. Addressing these gaps can provide actionable insights for enhancing leadership practices tailored to the Nigerian university context.

To advance leadership in Nigerian universities, several strategic approaches are crucial. Firstly, there is a need for leaders to adopt transformational leadership styles that emphasise vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. These styles foster a conducive environment for creativity, innovation, and high performance among faculty and staff. Secondly, implementing effective motivational strategies such as competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, comprehensive health care, and supportive work environments can enhance employee satisfaction and retention. Additionally, improving policy formulation and implementation processes is vital to ensure that institutional policies align with organisational goals and effectively address the needs of stakeholders. Finally, promoting democratic leadership that values participatory decision-making can empower staff, foster trust, and enhance organisational cohesion.

Enhancing leadership in Nigerian universities is critical not only for improving educational outcomes but also for driving national development. Effective leadership contributes to the production of high-quality graduates equipped to tackle global challenges and innovate within their fields. Moreover, strong leadership enhances the reputation and competitiveness of universities, attracting talent, funding, and partnerships on a global scale. By addressing the identified research gaps and implementing strategic leadership practices, Nigerian universities can position themselves as hubs of excellence, driving socio-economic growth and contributing significantly to the nation's development agenda.

Babalola (2023) submitted that there are many existing studies conducted on specific aspects of sustainability education in Nigerian universities, such as curricula and awareness, but there remains a significant research gap regarding comprehensive, all-inclusive institutional management practices of sustainable development. This oversight is critical, as fragmented efforts without holistic institutional commitment fail to achieve meaningful sustainability outcomes. While some research has addressed

elements that could enhance university sustainability, such as fiscal management and resource conservation, none has systematically examined the full spectrum of university management operations. This comprehensive perspective is crucial for understanding the broader leadership and management commitments to sustainability and identifying gaps that may hinder the realisation of the SDGs. Therefore, this study was conducted to thoroughly investigate the leadership practices necessary to address the awareness and knowledge deficits related to the implementation of effective sustainable management practices.

Literature Review

According to Anekwe (2020), leadership is a crucial element in the political sphere, characterised by the capacity to inspire confidence, and guide, and govern followers, as described by various scholars. An individual or group can inspire confidence and direct followers. The process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Leadership is also about influencing group or organisational behaviour, setting goals, formulating paths to those goals, and creating social norms. Leadership involves the exercise of social power, affecting personal behaviour, productivity, adjustment to working situations, and morale within organisations. emphasises that leadership is the essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working smoothly. The qualities of good leadership include transparency, accountability, honesty, and diplomacy, with leaders guiding groups towards achieving set goals.

Otuya and Okolo (2019) note that leadership is a process of influence enabling individuals or groups to inspire others towards achieving defined objectives. Effective leadership encompasses attributes such as wisdom, knowledge, charisma, competence, and tolerance that are vital for the success of any organisation, including higher education institutions. In Nigeria, leadership challenges have profound implications for the country's development, with issues such as economic underdevelopment, poverty, ethnic and religious violence, insecurity, and political instability underscoring the need for credible leaders. This leadership crisis extends to university

management, where the success of programs and policies requires competent, dedicated, and innovative leaders. University leaders must focus on total quality management and foster an environment conducive to learning and innovation. Effective university leadership involves establishing a vision, developing strategies for change, initiating meaningful projects, and mobilising followers for necessary actions. Addressing the leadership crisis in Nigeria's universities is crucial for achieving institutional objectives, contributing to national development, and cultivating leaders capable of inspiring and guiding their followers towards collective goals.

Ndukwe, Ukeje, and Onele (2016) think that institutional management in Nigerian universities is a complex interplay of leadership and management dynamics. Leadership involves setting a vision for the future and inspiring people to overcome obstacles, while management is about handling complexity. Meanwhile, the traditional view of management can be undemocratic, alienating leaders from followers and limiting follower responsibility to implementation rather than goal formulation. The authors add that effective university management encompasses various activities, including the accessibility of the Vice-Chancellor, belief in consultation, use of committees, regular senate meetings, and resource management. It essentially involves coordinating human and material resources to achieve predetermined objectives. Research indicates that decision-making in achieving these goals is often negotiated between leaders and followers, depending on the task and situation. However, university management styles in Nigeria face challenges such as politically motivated decision-making, mutual "back scratching," patronage, and partisanship, which undermine the effectiveness and integrity of these institutions.

Beckmann, Schaltegger and Landrum (2020) believe that sustainable management involves practices that ensure the long-term viability and productivity of resources, incorporating economic, ecological, and social dimensions. This concept's evolution can be traced back to the 18th century when Hans Carl von Carlowitz introduced sustainability in forest management, emphasising the importance of long-term implications in decision-making. Further, it entails meeting present needs without compromising future

generations' ability to meet theirs. This dual responsibility highlights the role of managers in balancing value creation and disvalue prevention. Additionally, triple bottom line (TBL) framework integrates ecological, economic, and social perspectives, emphasizing a multi-dimensional approach to sustainable management. In Nigerian universities, sustainable management is critical to addressing challenges such as resource allocation, infrastructure decay, and educational quality. Effective leadership in these institutions must adopt sustainability principles by fostering an environment that promotes long-term development, ethical resource use, and social responsibility. This entails not only creating value through education and research but also minimizing negative impacts on the environment and society, thus aligning university management with broader sustainability goals.

Statement of the Problem

The leadership landscape in Nigerian universities is marred by challenges, underlining the critical need for effective, transparent, and sustainable management. The interplay of leadership and management dynamics is complicated by economic underdevelopment, political instability, and systemic inefficiencies, which mar the achievement of institutional goals and national development. Despite the essential role of leadership in guiding, inspiring, and fostering innovation within universities, current practices often suffer from political interference, patronage, and lack of accountability, which degrades trust and productivity. Furthermore, sustainable management principles, which are vital for long-term viability and resource productivity, are not sufficiently integrated into the 'Nigerian university management framework', worsening issues like infrastructure decay and educational quality. Addressing these challenges requires a shift towards leadership that embodies transparency, accountability, and a commitment to sustainability, ensuring that Nigerian universities can fulfil their roles in societal development and the cultivation of future leaders. The current will therefore address perceived influence of leadership on sustainable management practices in Nigerian universities : a case

study of Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, offering empirical insight to addressing the leadership challenges identified.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the Perceived Influence of Leadership on Sustainable Management Practices in Nigerian Universities: A Case of Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. The specific objectives included:

1. To assess the perceived influence of leadership styles on the implementation of sustainable management practices in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo
2. To investigate the relationship between leadership styles and commitment to sustainable management practice in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo.

Research Questions

1. What is the perceived influence of leadership styles on the implementation of sustainable management practices in Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo
2. What is the relationship between leadership styles and commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo?

Methodology

The descriptive methodology of the survey type was adopted for this study. All lecturers in the Department of Educational Management, Library and Information science at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education comprised the population for the study. The purposive random sampling technique was used to select 20 lecturers. The Leadership and Sustainable Management Questionnaire was used to conduct a pilot study. The reliability coefficient was obtained at 0.87. The name of the research instrument used is the Insecurity. The validity and reliability coefficients were established by experts in the field of test and measurement. Respondents consented and responded to the face-to-face presentation of the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire items with 5 items were rated on a 4-Likert scale ranging from agree to strongly disagree (Strongly Agree (1), Agree

(2), Disagree (3), Strongly Disagree (4)). The descriptive statistics of frequency count, mean and standard deviation in SPSS were used to arrive at the results and make conclusions.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the perceived influence of leadership styles on the implementation of sustainable management practices in Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

Table 1: Influence of Leadership Styles on the Implementation of Sustainable Management Practices in Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

Summary of Response				
Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Effective leadership style at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education will encourage sustainable management practices	20	3.00	.734	Agreed
Effective leadership styles at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education will play a significant role in promoting sustainable management practices	20	3.13	.669	Agreed
A leadership style which regularly involves staff and students will promote sustainable management initiatives at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education	20	2.14	.845	Disagreed
Effective leadership styles will remove the administrative challenges of implementing sustainable management practices	20	3.38	.648	Agreed
Effective decision-making approach of the leadership will support the implementation of sustainability management policies	20	4.13	.747	Strongly agreed
Total	20			

Table 1 summarises responses regarding the influence of leadership styles on the implementation of sustainable management practices at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. The data shows that participants agree that effective leadership styles encourage

sustainable management practices (Mean = 3.00, SD = 0.734) and play a significant role in promoting these practices (Mean = 3.13, SD = 0.669). However, there is disagreement on whether leadership that regularly involves staff and students promotes sustainable management initiatives (Mean = 2.14, SD = 0.845). Participants agree that effective leadership styles can overcome administrative challenges in implementing sustainable practices (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.648), and strongly agree that effective decision-making supports the implementation of sustainability management policies (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.747).

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo?

Table 2: relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

Summary of Response				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
The leadership style will determine the commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education	20	3.28	.912	Agreed
There will be a relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education	20	3.36	.519	Agreed
There will be no relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practice at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education	20	2.35	.573	Disagreed
Leadership style will determine the level of commitment of members of staff to sustainable management practice	20	3.26	.736	Agreed
Total	30			

Table 2 summarises responses on the relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practices at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. Participants agreed that the leadership style influences the commitment to sustainable management practices (Mean = 3.28, SD = 0.912) and that there is a relationship between leadership style and commitment (Mean = 3.36, SD = 0.519). Conversely, participants disagreed with the statement that there is no relationship between leadership style and commitment to sustainable management practices (Mean = 2.35, SD = 0.573). Additionally, it was agreed that leadership style determines the level of staff commitment to sustainable management practices (Mean = 3.26, SD = 0.736).

Discussion of Findings

Participants generally agreed that effective leadership styles encourage sustainable management practices and that it plays a significant role in promoting these practices. This finding aligns with Anekwe (2020), who submitted that leadership is vital for guiding and governing followers towards achieving organisational goals, including sustainability. It is inferred that effective leaders can inspire confidence and direct followers, which is essential for implementing sustainable management practices. However, there was disagreement on whether leadership that regularly involves staff and students promotes sustainable management initiatives. This discrepancy might indicate a gap in participatory leadership practices at the university. According to Otuya and Okolo (2019), involving various stakeholders in decision-making processes is vital for fostering commitment and innovation. The disagreement suggests that current leadership practices may not adequately engage staff and students, thereby missing opportunities to leverage their insights and commitment to sustainability.

The data also reveals that effective leadership styles can overcome administrative challenges in implementing sustainable practices. This finding supports Ndukwe, Ukeje, and Onele (2016), who highlighted the importance of effective leadership in navigating the complexities of institutional management. Overcoming administrative hurdles is crucial for the smooth implementation of

sustainable practices, as it ensures that policies are not only formulated but also effectively executed. Furthermore, participants strongly agreed that effective decision-making supports the implementation of sustainability management policies. This aligns with Beckmann, Schaltegger, and Landrum (2023), who emphasized the role of leadership in integrating sustainable management practices into organizational strategies. Effective decision-making entails considering long-term implications and balancing economic, ecological, and social dimensions, which are critical for sustainability.

Conclusion

The findings from this study recognise the significant influence of leadership styles on the implementation and commitment to sustainable management practices at Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. Effective leadership styles that promote transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic decision-making are essential for fostering a culture of sustainability. However, findings indicate areas for improvement, particularly in engaging staff and students in sustainable initiatives.

Recommendations

1. Leaders of the university should increase engagement with staff and students in decision-making processes to foster commitment and innovation in sustainable management practices.
3. Implement training programs for leaders to develop skills in effective decision-making and inclusive leadership to support sustainability initiatives.
4. The university should establish clear communication channels to ensure that the insights and feedback from all stakeholders are considered in the implementation of sustainable practices.
5. Members of management should strengthen administrative support systems to overcome challenges and ensure the smooth execution of sustainability policies.

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