

LEADERS' IDEALIZED INFLUENCE AND INNOVATIVENESS OF NON-TEACHING STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between idealized influence and innovativeness of Non-Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for this study was 2760 non-academic staff in the 3 Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of 349 was determined using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between idealized influence and employee innovativeness of Non- Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State. Therefore, this study concludes that idealized influence positively enhance innovativeness of non- teaching staff in public universities in Rivers State. Hence the study recommends that Public Universities should provide leadership training and development programs that focus on cultivating idealized influence. Leaders should be trained to exemplify desirable qualities, ethics, and behaviors that inspire and motivate non-teaching staff to be innovative. They can also encourage a transformational leadership style among administrators and supervisors in public universities

Keywords: Idealized influence, employee innovativeness, employee creativity, risk-taking, proactiveness

INTRODUCTION

Idealized influence refers leader actions that make group values and goals salient. The leader promotes cooperation and teamwork by instilling in followers a desire to work towards common goals (Saboe et al., 2015). The leader does this by articulating a group vision (Conger & Kanungo, 1994) and fostering acceptance of group goals (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Emphasizing group goals is important as it elevates follower values and goals from self-interest to social interest and thus cultivates group cohesion. The leader demonstrates high ethical norms and becomes a role model for the subordinates (Bono & Judge, 2004). Inspirational motivation and idealized influence are together called charisma. Whereby, charismatic leaders have a positive influence on their followers and can change the self-focus of employees from negative to a positive focus (Yorges, Weiss & Strickland, 1999). The result is that subordinates become more involved with the vision of the leader and are willing to make more sacrifices for that vision (House and Howell, 1992) leading to commitment to their organizations and achievement of organizational goals.

Followers view the leader in an idealized way. The followers trust the leaders and they desire to emulate them. This aspect of transformational leadership has both idealized attribute and idealized behaviour and provides a way to distinguish between attribute and behavioural aspect of the idealized influence (Wang et al., 2013). Idealized attribute looks at the followers' perceptions of their leaders while idealized behaviour evaluates the followers' observations of the leader's behaviour (Elgelal & Noermijati, 2015).

Employee innovativeness is an essential component for businesses to remain competitive in today's dynamic marketplace. According to Marques, Ferreira, Kraus and Mahto (2022) there are several benefits to encouraging employees to be innovative. Such benefits include increased job satisfaction, creativity and motivation as well as greater organizational performance, job performance and organizational commitment. Encouraging employees to be innovative requires certain managerial strategies. Managers should create an environment of trust and support, encouraging employees to take risks and experiment with new ideas. A culture of innovation should also be established with specific goals, rewards, and recognition for innovative

performance. Furthermore, managers should provide employees with the necessary resources, training, and mentoring to help them understand the importance of innovation and how to apply it within the workplace. When businesses successfully use these strategies to develop and implement an innovative culture, the organization will benefit from the increased creativity and improved performance that result from the employees' increased innovativeness. The organization will also become more productive, efficient, and profitable (Haji Aghaee & Khalkhali, 2021). The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the relationship between leaders' idealized influence and innovativeness of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework



Figure 1: Idealized Influence and employee innovativeness

Source: Desk Research (2023)

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were posed for analysis:

1. What is the association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of creativity of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of proactiveness of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State?
3. What is the association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of risk-taking of non-teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory

Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory Leader member exchange is another employee engagement theory in line with the SET theory. LMX theory provides how leaders in groups maintain their position through a series of tacit exchange and agreements with their members (Salmon & Robinson, 2008). LMX thus focuses on the relationship between leader and follower. Graen (1975) developed this model operating on the premise that all subordinates are not treated equally. Because of time restraint and human nature, leaders often spend more time with one group of subordinates' than with others. This then become the in - group who are seen to perform at a higher level than their counter-parts in the out – group (Shrieberg & Shrieberg, 2011).

According to Batista-Taran et al., (2009) LMX focuses on the dyadic and quality of the relationship between leader and followers, and where members feel as a part of a group and of which they have more responsibilities, take proactive decisions and have high access to organizational resources. When the members feel the opposite where leader offers low levels of support to follower, the subordinates feel less motivated and this influences their ability to perform effectively.

Conceptual Review

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is the behavior of a leader who inspires trust, admiration, and respect among a team to the extent that members emulate him/her. In general, it entails leading by example in all aspects that influence and shape opinions of followers. A transformational leader is expected to exhibit idealized influence (Lim & Ployhart, 2014). The bottom-line of idealized influence as an exhibition of transformational leadership is leading by example in all aspects that influence or shape opinions of followers. These may not be limited to public manifestations only, but private action as well (Yukl, 2010). This is because what and how a leader exists in the private space, saliently impacts his leadership influence in general, which can always be observed on how the followers respond. Besides, its noteworthy that a

leader's stability in private space is directly related to his leadership effectiveness in the public arena, particularly for transformational leadership (Conger, 2014).

Idealized influence is the behavior of a leader who inspires trust, admiration, and respect among a team to the extent that members emulate him/her. Actions that are associated with idealized influence range from consideration of people's needs first and demonstrating consistency, good ethics and conduct (Lim & Ployhart, 2014). Such leader's boost the self-esteem of those for whom they are responsible for, which in essence makes them to command a lot of honor without their intention. Northouse (2014) emphasized the admiration and respect that transformational leaders exhibit is entrenched through commitment to advance the interests of the individuals in the group they are leading. Thus, idealized influence can be reliably associated with transformational leaders.

Employee Innovativeness

To understand how to lead creative and innovative individuals, one must first understand the type of process at hand, the type of people involved, and how a leader can influence both the process and the individuals (Janssen, Renkema & Bos-Nehles, 2017). It has been discovered that when creativity is supported and promoted in an organisation, the number of innovations may increase, and even individuals "who lack the natural inclination to be creative may become creative," with leaders playing a critical role in enabling this (Pasamar, de la RosaNavarro, & Diaz-Fernandez, 2019). (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2020) concluded in their review that leaders and their subordinates can exercise their creativity most effectively in organisations that encourage innovation and are de-formalized and de-centralized. (Lien, Mutonyi & Slatten, 2020) concluded that "supportive, inspirational, and non-controlling leadership" can improve employee creativity. Leaders can also assist innovators by communicating supportive values to subordinates and encouraging team members to engage in external communication with various stakeholders, which increases creativity (Groelj et al., 2020)

Measures of Employee Innovativeness

Employee Creativity (EC)

The EC is the establishment of novel ideas to improve the performance and increase the effectiveness & efficiency (Gong et al., 2009). The creativity is basically an employee's creative thinking, expertise, and skills based on one's experience and qualification. Employee creativity entails a high level of intellectual activity, therefore, the employees should be encouraged for hard work to attain breakthroughs. Furthermore, the creative employees can also share useful and new ideas to make necessary changings in the products and services (Shalley& Gilson, 2004). Khalili (2016) concluded that the leaders should value creative and innovative work and provide support for innovation to affect the employees' creativity and innovation positively. Additionally, the transformational leaders encourage employees to put forward novel ideas and use innovative problem-solving techniques to stimulate employee creativity for achievement of organizational innovation. Employee creativity—the production of novel and useful solutions, procedures, products, and services—is critical to organizational survival and success in an ever-changing and competitive business environment (Yuniawan, 2022).

Risk-Taking

Risk is a characteristic of decisions where there is uncertainty regarding positive or negative outcomes (March & Shapira, 1992; Sitkin& Pablo, 1992). Risk-taking can be defined as making a behavioural decision where there is uncertainty regarding the valence and magnitude of outcomes resulting from such decisions (Breakwell, 2014). Past research has identified many variables affecting risk-taking and these were summarized by Baird and Thomas (1985) as: environmental (e.g., government regulation); industry (e.g., competition); organisational (e.g., organisation values, structure, incentives); decision make (e.g., self-confidence, biases, heuristics); and strategic problem factors (e.g., outcomes, controllability). Risk is regarded as an important aspect of business success and business leaders consider the management of risk as an essential component of their leadership roles (March & Shapira, 1987).

Companies generating new products typically take risks even as the demand for the new product cannot be certain (Neves & Eisenberger, 2013). Risk-taking leads to improved company performance (Collins, 1994; 2001; Peters & Waterman, 1982). In addition, risk is viewed as a necessity for business innovation (Dickson, 1992; Kraatz, 1998; Kundra, 2016; Tan, 2001; Tjosvold & Yu, 2007; Wiseman & Gomez-Mejia, 1998) and positive relations has been observed between risk-taking and innovation (Naldi, Nordqvist, Sjoberg, & Wiklund, 2007). Wiederkehr (2015; p.1) concludes that “for anyone who wants to be successful in business, there is no avoiding risk”

Proactiveness

Proactiveness is the tendency to anticipate and act on future needs rather than reacting to events after they unfold. A proactive organization is one that adopts an opportunity-seeking perspective. Such organizations act in advance of shifting market demand and are often either the first to enter new markets or “fast followers” that improve on the initial efforts of first movers (Certo, Moss & Short, 2009). By embracing opportunities that others fear, proactive executives have carved out a lucrative niche in a world that is technologically, environmentally, and politically turbulent. Proactiveness is related to initiative and first-mover advantages and to taking initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The Oxford dictionary defines proactiveness as acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) argued that pro-activeness may be crucial to an entrepreneurial orientation because it suggests a forward-looking perspective that is accompanied by innovative and entrepreneurial activity. Proactiveness relates to market opportunity in entrepreneurship by seizing initiative and acting opportunistically in order to shape the environment, that is, to affect trends and, perhaps, even to create demand.

Empirical Review

Idealized Influence and Employee Innovativeness

A study by Abbasi and Zamani-Miandashti (2013) revealed that transformational leaders build the capacity and capabilities of their subordinates and encourage them to work to their maximum potential consequently improving their productivity and performance of the organizations. According to this study effective leadership practices can provide strategic direction to followers, create confidence and motivate the followers to handle uncertainty and challenges that affect the organizational performance. This heightens the followers' awareness and self-confidence ultimately increasing organization performance. The high levels of capabilities awareness lead to strategic agility that enables them to adjust and adapt in face of uncertainty and challenges as they emerge (Ananthram & Nankervis, 2013).

Wilderom, Berg and Wiersma (2012) researched the combined impact of charismatic leadership and organizational culture on commercial banks in Netherlands. They collected data from one thousand two hundred and fourteen staff from forty-six bank branches. They assessed areas such as charismatic initiative, work culture and philosophy, and aspects of authoritarian management. The outcome of that study pointed out that charismatic leadership increased organizational financial returns among the commercial banks surveyed. Leaders who exhibit idealized influence make followers endeared to them, and that followers like to be identified with them (Das, Arora & Singhal, 2000). Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

Ho1: There is no significant association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of creativity of non- teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Ho2: There is no significant association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of proactiveness of non- teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Ho3: There is no significant association between leaders' idealized influence and the level of risk-taking of non- teaching staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was 2760 non-academic staff in the 3 Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of 349 was determined using the Taro Yamen's 1970

formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics knowledge management and employee resilience in insurance companies in Rivers State. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for idealized influence and measures of innovativeness. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 1 Correlations matrix for idealized influence and measures of innovativeness

			Idealized Influence	Employee Creativity	Employee Risk- taking	Employee Proactiveness
Spearman's rho	Idealized Influence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.688**	.780**	.693**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	324	324	324	324
	Employee Creativity	Correlation Coefficient	.688**	1.000	.691**	.589**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	324	324	324	324
	Employee Risk- taking	Correlation Coefficient	.780**	.691**	1.000	.811**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	324	324	324	324
	Employee Proactiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.693**	.589**	.811**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	324	324	324	324

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between idealized influence and employee creativity of Non-Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.688 on the relationship between idealized influence and employee creativity. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee creativity was as a result of the adoption of idealized influence. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between idealized influence and employee creativity of Non-Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between idealized influence and employee risk-taking of Non-Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 1 also shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.780 on the relationship between idealized influence and employee risk-taking. This value implies that a strong relationship exists

between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee risk-taking was as a result of the adoption of idealized influence. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between idealized influence and employee risk-taking of Non- Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between idealized influence and employee proactiveness of Non- Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.693 on the relationship between idealized influence and employee proactiveness. This value implies that a substantial relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in employee proactiveness was as a result of the adoption of idealized influence. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between idealized influence and employee proactiveness of Non- Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between idealised influence and innovativeness of non- teaching staff in public universities in Rivers State. This finding corroborates the earlier finding of Abbasi and Zamani-Miandashti (2013) who revealed that transformational leaders build the capacity and capabilities of their subordinates and encourage them to work to their maximum potential consequently improving their productivity and performance of the organizations. Wilderom, Berg and Wiersma (2012) researched the combined impact of charismatic leadership and organizational culture on commercial banks in Netherlands. They collected data from one thousand two hundred and fourteen staff from forty-six bank branches. They assessed areas such as charismatic initiative, work culture and philosophy, and aspects of authoritarian management. The outcome of that study pointed out that

charismatic leadership increased organizational financial returns among the commercial banks surveyed. Leaders who exhibit idealized influence make followers endeared to them, and that followers like to be identified with them (Das, Arora & Singhal, 2000).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that idealized influence positively enhance employee innovativeness in Public Universities in Rivers State of Non- Teaching Staff in Public Universities in Rivers State. Based on the foregoing, the study thus recommends that public universities should provide leadership training and development programs that focus on cultivating idealized influence. Leaders should be trained to exemplify desirable qualities, ethics, and behaviors that inspire and motivate non-teaching staff to be innovative. They can also encourage a transformational leadership style among administrators and supervisors in public universities

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