

The Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance in Jinja City Council: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This study sought to assess the influence of Leadership Style on Employee Performance in Jinja City Council. The study objectives were to: establish how Autocratic leadership style, Democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style influences employee performance at Jinja City Council. The study employed descriptive research design where qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, opinions, and suggestions on the influence of leadership styles on employee performance at Jinja City Council. The study population was 72 employees from Jinja City Council which comprised of Mayor, Town Clerk, CFO, Commercial officer, Accountants, Procurement officer, Cashier, Internal Auditor and opinion leaders. The researcher used simple random sampling technique (randomization) as it ensured that each member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample and purposively sampled. Data from questionnaires will be cleaned and checked for consistence. The pre-coded data was thereafter entered into a computer and analyzed using SPSS version 20. The qualitative data was then coded and codes will be used to identify themes. Thematic analysis was used to analysis the data after which conclusions were made on individual questions. The findings of this study highlight the critical role that leadership styles play in influencing employees' performance. Autocratic leadership, which involves centralized decision-making and minimal employee participation, was found to have a detrimental impact on performance. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that rigid control and lack of employee engagement suppress innovation and reduce motivation. Directive leadership, on the other hand, was found to have a significant positive effect on employees' performance. Leaders who provide clear instructions, establish expectations, and set structured goals contribute to a more efficient work environment and in contrast, laissez-faire leadership exhibited an insignificant relationship with employees' performance, implying that a completely hands-off approach does not necessarily improve productivity. Employees who lack proper supervision and guidance may struggle with accountability and decision-making.

Keywords: Autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style and employee performance

Introduction

Leadership is a critical factor that influences the performance and productivity of employees within any organization. In the context of public administration, such as the Jinja City Council, effective leadership becomes even more essential due to the unique challenges faced by local government entities. This study aims to explore the various leadership styles employed within the Jinja City Council and their subsequent impact on employee performance.

Background of the Study

In the recent past years, leadership styles have played a significant role in influence the performance of employees in various organizations. Leading is the process of influencing others to accomplish specified objectives. Leadership styles have an impact on the performance of employees; it strengthens and builds confidence in them to help them accomplish the respective tasks hence improving the organization performance in the long run. Leadership has engaged as a new effective approach for managing the employees and organization at large. The traditional concept of personnel administration has been gradually replaced with the human resource management. This give importance to the strategic integration of new leadership styles into effective management of employees and to improve the employee performance (Iqbal et al., 2015). Leadership styles have a great impact on the performance of employees, for every organization to meet its objectives, the employees are supposed to work effectively and efficiently so as to achieve organization objectives (Udovita, 2020). Good leaders possess good skills which help them to motivate the employees to work efficiently as motivated employees tend to work well and minimize resource wastage in the organization's. In today's highly competitive environment, organizations are increasingly aware of the vital importance of enhancing employee performance to achieve their objectives. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in shaping subordinate job performance, as human resources are identified as a key asset that can enhance outcomes and provide a competitive advantage (Udovita, 2020).

Employee performance is one of the most important aspects in the success of every organization and competitiveness. It is composed of various elements and they include quality, output of an employee's work, efficiency as well as having the ability to work as a team so as to achieve organization performance. Therefore, the type of leadership style employed by management influences employee's performance in different ways. Good leaders tend to provide employees with practicable solutions which makes employees motivated and willing to work harder hence leading better organization. That is why good leadership creates high employee commitment and motivation (Iqbal et al., 2015).

In addition, Iqbal et al. (2015) highlighted in their findings that management that has effective leadership often motivate and drive their employees towards achieving organizational goals. Leadership styles such as Autocratic leadership style and Democratic leadership style tend to influence their employees to better performance as they tend to give their employees room to discuss organization matters or involve them in the decision process with motivates to feel part of the organization whereas the laissez-faire leadership style just the name of the leadership style, it doesn't have positive significant influence as employees are left to work their pace.

Employee performance is one the important factors towards achieving organization performance, however good and better leadership style blends this all as strong leadership helps to improve on the performance of the organization by developing crucial solutions for any business challenges that may arise in the organization, inspiring innovations and creativity and fostering conducive working environment for the employees. Leadership style has immense impact on employees to perform, grow and lead to positive attitude towards achieving organizational goals. The study explores the influence of different leadership style on employee performances. The objective is to review past literature to understand that how different style such as autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional, and participant approach influence worker execution (Mohiuddin, 2017).

However, constructive relationship between leadership style effectiveness and employee performance plays a significant role towards achieving organization targets (Mohiuddin, 2017). Studies by Setiawan et al. (2021) revealed that some leadership styles are characterized by passive behaviours which hinder employee performance whereas leaders who implement good leadership leaders always breed an environment that creates employee commitment and promote motivation among employees hence improving their effectiveness and efficiency in the organization.

Performance is the ratio between output and total of factors required to achieve it. Performance is efficiency in individual production. It is a multinational factor in companies, in which it could be usually improved by employees' efforts. The relationship between leaders' behaviour or the leadership style and workers has gained increased attention from the community. The type of leadership style has impact on how organizations cope with improving productivity; the Transformational leadership style has a crucial function in improving productivity by way of improved marketability and creating strategic vision of the organization (Setiawan et al., 2021).

Jinja City Council has reported declining organization performance as it was reported in the Audit Report of the Auditor General (2021) decline in revenue collection, poor service delivery in terms education and health. Despite employee appraisals, like many other Local government institutions, it is faced with poor employee performance characterized by low employee motivation, inefficiency and inadequate accountability. The leadership styles adopted by supervisors and managers in this institution play a crucial role in either enhancing or hindering employee performance (Northouse, 2018). It's therefore on this ground that the researcher carried out the study to assess the influence of leadership styles on employee performance in Jinja City Council.

Problem Statement

Leadership styles play a significant role in employee performance of the organization, as it influences motivation, productivity, and service delivery in the organization. Leadership styles in Jinja City Council should comprise of participatory approach that inspires and encourages employees to work effectively and efficiently hence improving on the productivity and output. Leaders should employ a blend of democratic, transformational, and supportive leadership styles that inspire employees, enhance job satisfaction, and promote optimal performance (Okidi & Kabunga, 2024).

However, the organization performance of Jinja City Council is declining as the Report of Auditor General (2021) revealed that Jinja City Council reported low revenue collection, poor cabbage collection, poor education services and poor health services. Further the Staff Evaluation Report (2019) revealed that over 43% of the employees failed to meet their performance targets as observed from the low revenue collection, poor cabbage collection, poor education services and poor health services. The study therefore focused on establishing the influence of leadership styles on employee performance in Jinja City Council.

Objectives of the Study

1. To establish how Autocratic leadership style influences employee performance at Jinja City Council.
2. To establish the effect of Democratic leadership style influences on employee performance at Jinja City Council.
3. To find out how laissez-faire leadership style influences employee performance at Jinja City Council.

Research Questions

1. How does Autocratic leadership style influence employee performance at Jinja City Council?
2. What is the effect of Democratic leadership style on employee performance at Jinja City Council?
3. How does laissez faire leadership style influence employee performance at Jinja City Council?

Significance of the Study

The study findings are expected to benefit organizations and local councils intending to obtain effective performance from their workers by using new approaches to leadership by reducing the influence of authoritative leadership and increasing the use of corporate leadership. Further the study would also be useful to leaders, councillors, and managers in organizations by employing leadership styles that are relevant. In addition, the research was also intended to be useful to future researchers, students and academicians digesting the effect and importance of the different leadership styles on performance. By exploring how this study revealed new findings and adding to the existing knowledge.

Literature Review

In autocratic leadership, the leader also retains the overall decision-making powers for themselves with the idea that the employees will implement the decisions made, they are always not bothered about the minds of the employees towards the decision's made but rather things about getting all works done effectively. He tells the staff what to do and how to do it, asserts himself and serves as an example for the subordinates (Anyodo, 2019). A study conducted in East Africa particularly Tanzania revealed that Autocratic Leadership influences employee performance significantly (Matiko & Mbuti, 2021). The findings revealed that majority of the respondents (75%) agreed that autocratic leadership influences the behavior and how things are done for instance, management always makes decision while with the view that the idea will be implemented by the employees hence resulting to productive output. Similarly, Takrouni and Alsharqi (2021) found that autocratic leadership

significantly impacts performance in Saudi Arabian medical centres due to strict adherence to procedures.

According to Cherry (2015), the autocratic leader alone determines policy and assigns tasks to individuals without any consultation with them. Subordinates are expected to carry out the leader's directives without question, and the leader rules by decree. This type of leadership is also known as coercive, dictatorial, directive, dominating or authoritarian. In an instance where employees are sidelined in decision-making processes, they feel demoralized and demotivated since they develop an attitude that they are not part of the organization. However, this may bring about resentment and resistance by employees if decisions are made secretly and just imposed on to them as this discourages them and makes them feel they are not part of the organization, thus affecting the performance of the institution.

Democratic leadership style is exhibited where the focus of power is more towards the group as a whole, and where there is greater interaction within the group (Mullins, 2018). The manager shares the leadership functions with members of the group where he or she takes part as a team member. The manager would characteristically lay the problem before the subordinates and invite discussion. In this respect the manager's role is to be a conference leader rather than that of decision taker. The manager allows the decision to emerge out of the process of the group discussion, instead of imposing it on the group as a boss. A relationship between commitment and Democratic leadership style was reported in prior studies. Several studies found a positive relationship between the two variables. For instance, Lo et al. (2016) concluded that the leadership styles of supervisors are main dimensions of the social context because they shape subordinates' organizational commitment in various ways. Similarly, Ponnu and Tennakoon (2017) found that where the leaders were morally upright it will influence employee organizational commitment in a positive manner and raise the employees' confidence in their leadership.

Waterman and Peters (2015) assert that, "the effective leader must be a good diagnostician and adopt style to meet the demands of the situation in which they operate". The amount of direction and social backup a leader gives to subordinates is dependent on their styles to fit the context. Today, leaders are the essential drivers of good and quality performance especially in public institutions; and for them to be able to achieve that; they must be equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge. Anyango, (2015) examined the relationship between employees' organisational commitment dimensions and leadership styles. The study found a positive relationship between a transformational leadership style and affective and normative employee commitments. On the other hand, a laissez-faire leadership style emerged as negatively associated with employees' affective commitment. Under this type of leadership according to Kumar (2015) maximum freedom is allowed to subordinates. They are given free hand in deciding their own policies and methods and to make independent decisions. It carries the belief that the most effective leadership style depends on the ability to allow some degree of freedom to employees in administering any leadership style. This study aimed at investigating further how laissez-faire may contribute to employee performance. Contingent Rewards: Transactional leaders link the goal to rewards, clarify expectations, provide necessary resources, set mutually agreed upon goals, and provide various kinds of rewards for successful performance.

Theoretical Review

The study was underpinned by Taylor's (1856-1915) scientific management theory which was developed in the early 20th century. The theory seeks to improve an organization's efficiency by systematically improving the efficiency of task completion by utilizing scientific, engineering, and mathematical analysis. The goal is to reduce waste, increase the process and methods of production, and create just distribution of goods. This goal serves the common interests of employers, employees and society. The theory maintains that leaders/managers should gather information, analyse it, and reduce it to rules, laws, or mathematical formulas; and that manager should select workers scientifically and train them (Blanchard, 2009). Leaders should also ensure that the techniques developed by science are used by the workers and that managers apply the work equally between workers and themselves; where leaders apply scientific management theories to planning and the workers perform the tasks pursuant to the plans. The idea here is that workers should be given as much autonomy as practically possible so that they can use the most appropriate approaches in order to effectively perform their tasks. In addition, front line workers need to show flexibility in a rapidly-changing environment since rigid, rules-driven organizations really struggle to adapt in such situations. McGregor (1960) hypothesized two distinct theories of leadership behaviours based on the Theory X and Theory Y model. These theories contend that leadership behaviours are based on an assumption about employees. Theory X hypothesizes that employees dislike work and will avoid it if possible. These employees lack ambition, dislike responsibility and prefer to be led. Here, managerial behaviours will include coercing employees, controlling their tasks and activities and directing their behaviours. Theory Y hypothesizes that employees can view work as a positive experience given the right working conditions and they enjoy taking responsibilities. Here, managerial behaviours include providing encouragement, positive reinforcement and rewards (McGregor, 1960).

Gap Identification

While existing research has extensively explored various leadership styles such as transformational, servant, and participative leadership and their effects on employee performance, there remains a notable gap in understanding how these leadership approaches specifically influence employee performance within local government settings in Uganda, particularly in Jinja City Council. studies have been conducted in different cultural and organizational contexts, such as the hospitality industry in Indonesia Darul et al., (2024) and the construction sector in Nigeria Ibrahim (2023), limiting the generalization of their findings to Ugandan City Councils. Given the unique socio-cultural and administrative dynamics of local governments in Uganda, it is imperative to investigate how leadership styles impact employee performance in this specific context to inform tailored leadership development programs and policy formulations.

Methodology

Research Design

The study design used in this study was descriptive research design where qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, opinions, and suggestions on the effect of leadership styles of employee performance. The design was used because it was a method of investigation in which self-report data collection from samples of pre-determined interests was done (Cresswell, 2008). Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect data using information collected at theoretical and practical levels.

Sampling Design

The research population was 72 which comprised of Mayor, Town Clerk, CFO, Commercial officer, Accountants, Procurement officer, Cashier, Internal Auditor and opinion leaders. The sample size was got from the population of 72 people and this was determined using Slovene's formula shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n = sample size

N = population

e = level of significance = 0.05 in social science research

$$\frac{n = 72}{1 + 72(0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{n = 72}{1 + 72(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{72}{1 + 0.18}$$

$$n = \frac{72}{1.18}$$

n = 61 respondents

The sample size was 61 people and the sample was population from each category divided by the overall population and multiplied by sample size. The researcher used simple random sampling technique (randomization) as it ensured that each member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. The researcher also used purposively sampled on specific respondents because they are knowledgeable about the research problem. Their participation was pre-arranged in advance to benefit from their rich knowledge

Data Collection

Data is anything given or admitted as a fact on which a research inference will be based. The researcher used questionnaire

and interview guide for data collection. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts to gather information from respondents. Although they are often designed for statistical analysis of the responses, this is not always the case (Amin, 2005). The researcher will use the questionnaire survey because it will be practical and allow large amounts of information to be collected from a large number of respondents in a short period of time, which will be relatively cost-effective.

Interviews - Consultations will be conducted through 'person to person' or 'face to face' verbal communication in which one person was interviewed at a time. Interviews will be to follow up on ideas and get in-depth data for the study, as indicated by Creswell (2003). In addition, they will also allow the researcher to revisit some of the issues that had been overlooked in other instruments and are still considered vital for the study

Qualitative Data Analysis - Field notes from individual interview will be edited and thereafter transcribed for individual interviews. The researcher will read through the individual interviews to understand the common themes and patterns in the data. The qualitative data will then be coded and codes will be used to identify themes. Thematic analysis will be used to analysis the data after which conclusions will be made on individual questions.

Results and Discussion

How does Autocratic leadership style influence employee performance at Jinja City Council?

Results showed majority of the respondents 61% agreed that they are given few opportunities to make suggestions while 34% disagreed and 4% were not sure respectively. This was in line with the literature review by Dubrin (2015) who said that in autocratic leadership, the manager retains most authority for himself and makes decision with the mind that subordinates will implement it. He is not bothered about attitudes of the subordinates toward a decision; he is rather concerned about getting the task done. The study also revealed that the respondents also moderately disagreed that there exists high levels of staff absenteeism and turnover as 39% strongly disagreed, 23% disagreed while 31% and 7% agreed and were not sure respectively. This finding was reinforced by one key informant interviewee, who noted that,

"Here at Jinja City Council, we value employee motivation and motivated employees are less likely to indulge in counter-productive work behaviour which may have a negative effect on both institutional and individual employee performance."

The study found out that 21% strongly agreed while 43% agreed and 34% disagreed that they are not consulted on policy determination with a mean of 3.3929. This was in line with the literature review by Cherry (2015), who said that the autocratic leader alone determines policy and assigns tasks to individuals without any consultation with them. Subordinates are expected to carry out the leader's directives without question and the leader rules by decree. From the table 4.5 above, 52% agreed while 11% strongly agreed and 37% disagreed that there is no staff motivation.

The findings of this study highlight the critical role that leadership styles play in influencing employees' performance. Autocratic leadership, which involves centralized decision-making and minimal employee participation, was found to have a detrimental impact on performance. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that rigid control and lack of employee engagement suppress innovation and reduce motivation (Walker et al., 2021). Employees under autocratic leadership often experience low morale, feel undervalued, and lack the confidence to take ownership of their tasks, leading to suboptimal performance. Therefore, organizations should consider alternative leadership approaches that encourage employee participation while maintaining necessary levels of control.

The study concluded that Autocratic leadership has a positive relationship with employee performance at Jinja City Council. This was seen in areas where employees are given opportunity to make suggestions; they are consulted on policy determination; there is staff motivation; they are closely supervised; and strong orientation towards conformity of rules and regulations, among others. It was also concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between Democratic leadership and employee performance at Jinja City Council and it is realized that employees are invited during decision making; employees are motivated to work hard by way of providing allowances and other benefits; staff meetings are held regularly; there is trust and respect of leaders; there is positive employee attitude towards work; and workers feel they control their own destiny.

What is the effect of Democratic leadership style on employee performance at Jinja City Council?

Results from the study revealed that 29% strongly agreed while 34% agreed and 33% disagreed. Most of the respondents were in agreement with the argument that they are invited during decision making. Therefore, this not only increases job satisfaction by involving employees or team members in what is going on, but it also helps to develop people's skills. Findings also showed that some of the respondents were in agreement with the argument that there is commitment from subordinate as 63% agreed while 37% disagreed. This implied that leadership focuses on change, visionary leadership and enhancing individual and organizational outcomes. Members are given the chance to build up their leadership skills, participate in leadership and contribute to decision-making. It is arguably more efficient than autocratic leadership. On asking about if there is full trust and respect for leaders, most of the respondents were in agreement that is to say 20% strongly agreed and 30% agreed while 47% disagreed. This was in line with one of those who were interviewed who said that, “

“Democratic leadership style influences the employee performance, in that when subordinates are given the chance to take part in decision making in an organization, this creates trust and respect among the leaders and the subordinates as this makes one feel confident that they are part of the organization”.

Democratic leadership, on the other hand, was found to have a significant positive effect on employees' performance. Leaders who provide clear instructions, establish expectations, and set structured goals contribute to a more efficient work environment. Employees in such settings benefit from clarity in their roles, which minimizes confusion and enhances productivity. This finding suggests that City leaders should prioritize directive leadership practices to enhance efficiency and maintain high performance levels. However, it is essential to balance directive leadership with elements of employee autonomy to avoid excessive dependence on leadership guidance. Recent research also highlights that those employees working under directive leadership tend to develop stronger problem-solving skills and organizational commitment due to a clear understanding of their roles (Mitchell & Brown, 2022).

How does laissez-faire leadership style influence employee performance at Jinja City Council?

The researcher in his finding found that, 75% of the respondents were in agreement that there is no total respect for rules and regulations while 25% were not sure and disagreed. This was in line with the literature review by Mullins (2018) who describes laissez-faire style as genuine and it is where the manager observes subordinates“ working well on their own. Results from the study revealed that 27% of the respondents strongly disagreed that employees do not follow routine and repetitive task performance, 41% disagreed, while 18% agreed and 14% strongly agreed. Therefore, this implied that the employees follow routine and repetitive task performance as this easy they work. This was in line with those who were interviewed. Results further revealed that majority of the respondents 68% disagreed that employees do not follow established directions. This was in line with one of those who were interviewed.

“According to the one of the respondents who was interviewed was quoted saying that employees do not follow established directions. She continued and said that this is because laissez-faire leadership style is one which has no restrictions as employees are left to do their work without supervision or pressure”.

Majority (73%) of the respondents were in agreement that they are demoralized by the inflexibility and high control. This implied that the employees are not motivated by the supervisors or managers hence influencing employee performance. Results from table 4.7 above, shows that majority 68% of respondents disagreed that there is high staff turnover and low performance while 29% agreed and this was in line with the mean of 2.3750, showing a significant influence between the variables. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership exhibited an insignificant relationship with employees' performance, implying that a completely hands-off approach does not necessarily improve productivity. Employees who lack proper supervision and guidance may struggle with accountability and decision-making, leading to inconsistent results. While some autonomy is beneficial in fostering creativity, a total absence of leadership involvement can lead to inefficiencies. These findings suggest that leaders in Jinja City Council should adopt a balanced approach, integrating structured guidance with elements of autonomy to optimize employee performance.

Lastly it was also concluded that there is no significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and employee

performance at Jinja City Council; and it was realized that the employees at Jinja City Council do not follow established directions. It was also concluded that employees to some extents have no respect for rules and regulations. Nevertheless, according to the study findings, it was concluded that laissez-faire leadership style has a relationship with employee performance at Jinja City Council but not significant.

Implement Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation will help to develop a robust framework for regularly assessing the effectiveness of HR practices, including periodic surveys and performance reviews. Use data-driven insights to make necessary adjustments in HR policies, ensuring alignment with evolving employee needs and organizational objectives. Foster a Culture of Transparency and Inclusivity and transparency Promote an organizational culture that values transparency in all HR-related decisions, from remuneration to promotions, to build trust and increase job satisfaction. Ensure that any changes in HR policies are implemented consistently and equitably across all departments. By implementing these recommendations, Mbale City Council can create a more supportive work environment that not only improves employee satisfaction but also drives higher organizational performance. These recommendations, grounded in both theoretical and empirical evidence, aim to bridge the gap between employee satisfaction and organizational performance at Mbale City Council.

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