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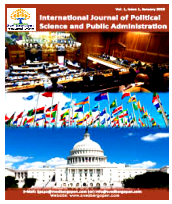

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Traits, Attitudes and Behavior of Leaders: Does it Matter in Public Administration?

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Abstract

Leadership plays a critical role in the success and failure of public administration. Yet leadership possesses different traits, attitudes and behavior which they import to their work environment (both public and private). Leadership has a bearing on the performance of individuals, teams and the institution. This study evaluates leadership traits, attitudes and behavior in relation to public administration. It starts by conceptually unpacking the concept of leadership, leadership theories, traits, attitudes and behaviors. The author argues that traits,, attitudes and behavior of leaders matters in public administration.

Keywords: *Leadership, Leadership theories, Traits, Attitudes, Behaviors, Institutions, Public administration*

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1. Introduction

The essence of leadership in institutions is according to Adair (2004), Northouse (2007), Yukl (2012) and the Western Governors University (2020) is to influence and direct efforts of individual and teams to work towards shared goal or objective. Leaders influence others to follow them. Leaders hold the ability to stimulate or inspire (Goleman, 2011) creative minds or innovation (Luttikhuis, 2014) of those who perform work or execute institutional task. Such leadership can influence the public sector administration to excel towards organizational goal and inspire innovative work.

Therefore, leadership influences the character of their followers due to their ability to motivate or discourage them. In essence, leadership contributes to the general wellbeing of institutions and nations (Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013). Every present day institution longs for effective and good leadership. However, the style of leadership of each institution and individual leaders may vary according to the institution. Of course, there are different are leadership styles and different types of leadership. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the relationship of leadership traits, attitudes and behavior with public administration. Leadership plays an important role in combating institutional problems such as insecurity, estrangement, non-commitment etc. (Sirin *et al.*, 2018).

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2. Purpose

This paper evaluates leadership, leadership theories, leadership traits, attitudes and behavior of leaders in relation to the public service. It does so by assessing the relationship between leadership traits, attitudes and behavior with the public administration. It start by presenting a tabulated comparison of the definitions of the leadership concept. It posits and synthesize each leadership theory with public administration and assess the relationship between the two. It seeks to assess the relationship of leadership traits, attitudes and behavior with public administration. The study used in depth literature search to explore leadership, leadership theories, traits, attitudes and behavior.

3. What is Leadership?

Leadership is according to Yukl (2002) and Western (2013) having different meanings accorded to it by different individuals. Hence there is no single definition given to the concept leadership and the definitions are at times holding common or different interpretations. Whereas, Rost (1997) suggest that leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers whose intend are real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. By design leadership is complex and multidimensional (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). To this end, leadership remain a key factor within institutions as it according to Ghazzawi *et al.* (2017) assisting the attainment / realization of institutional goals.

Table 1 reflects on the different definitions given to leadership taken from literature:

Table 1: Definitions of Leadership According to Literature

Author	Year of Publication	Place/Country	Type	Definition of Leadership
Gardner	1990	New York, USA	Book	Leadership is the process of persuasion or an example by which an individual or collective induces other individuals or a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and the followers.
Rost	1997	–	Journal	Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers whose intend are real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.
Burns	2003	New York	Book	Leadership is a moral undertaking, a response to the human wants expressed in public value and a response to people wants (2003). Leadership is a collective (2003)
Klingborg, Moore and Varea-Hammond	2006	USA	Journal	The process-oriented, non-specific practices of challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.
de Jong and Hartog	2007	Netherlands	Journal	The process of influencing others to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization towards some kind of desired outcome.
Western	2013	London, UK	Book	Leadership is a psychosocial influencing dynamic.
Daglish [Chapter1]	2015	Cape Town, RSA	Book	Leadership is about the act of leading and the role, style and effectiveness of leaders, regardless of how they came to lead.

From Table 1, it is clear that the concept of leadership has been accorded a variety of definitions. The common view is the influence instilled on others and the desired goal of the leader or the collective. This make leadership a psychological approach more than the initial theory of physique, beauty and conduct.

4. Theories of Leadership

Madanchian *et al.* (2016) classifies leadership theories into four historical groups, namely: (i) Early theorists (Great man, trait, and environmental); (ii) Interactive theorists (Personal-situational, and interaction-expectation); (iii) Organizational theorists (Humanistic and task-relationship theories); and (iv) Modern theorists (measured by influence on the follower's behavior).

Yukl (2012) and Khan *et al.* (2016) argues that leadership theories has evolved with time. In addition, Yukl (2012) identifies the transition from path-goal, leadership substitutes, situational leadership and the managerial grid theories to transformational leadership, charismatic leadership theories as key periods of change in leadership theories.

4.1. The Great Man Theory of the 1840's

Klingborg *et al.* (2006) observes that between the late 1800s to about 1930, leadership theories emphasized control and centralization of power. The great man theory is one of the oldest theories and it emphasis on the belief that great leaders are born (innate) and destined by nature to be powerful (Madanchian *et al.*, 2016; Khan *et al.*, 2016; Benmira and Agboola, 2021). It therefore sought to dispel the notion that leaders are developed or capacitated but they are unique and great by design. The great man theory of leadership has according to Khan *et al.* (2016) lost relevance to democratization to leadership potential leadership.

The great man leadership theory is irrelevant to public administration. Public administration desires excellence and achievement not powerfulness. The greatness of public administrators is not defined by physique but through their ability to deliver. Public administration celebrate those who achieve their goals efficiently, effectively and economically. The great man theorist have also been surpassed by a new mind-set which focused on the traits elements (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). More focus was shifted to behavioral elements observed from leadership over time.

4.2. Trait Theory of Leadership 1930's to the 1940's

The trait theory of leadership adds personality elements that set the leaders above the rest (Khan *et al.*, 2016; Benmira and Agboola, 2021). It acknowledges the emergent physique element of traits (height, appearance etc.) and introduces acquired traits (non-physical). In essence, the trait theories hold a belief that leaders can be born (inherited) or made (trained and developed). Public administration could also appreciate different traits uniquely exhibited by its leaders above the rest for the benefit of the Institutions. The trait element has a stronger relationship with the public administration but physique is not any indicator of performance in the public administration.

4.3. Behavioral Theory of Leadership 1940s to the 1950s

Benmira and Agboola (2021) and Khan *et al.* (2016) noted the shift from the trait theory to a more behavioral aspect of leadership. The behavioral aspect of leadership do not focus on the traits of leaders but focusses on behavioral patterns of leadership and draw its theories form the observation. The emphasis of the behavioral theory is according to Marume and Ndzudzo (2016) the combined focus on the (i) action of leaders; (ii) their leadership process and action; and (iii) their motivation approaches plus their tools and acts of communication. The behavior of a leader influences the followers in both positive and negative way.

The behavioral aspect of leadership still finds in resonance within public administration as the leadership of the public administration exert direct or indirect influence on their followers. Kapur (2020) emphasizes that there are acquired or developed behaviors that leaders must exhibit. It is important that leaders (i) manage time appropriately; (ii) think critically; (iii) manage and resolve conflicts; (iv) uphold good work ethics; and (v) execute their duties excellently. These behaviors must be instilled, trained and enforced in the public sector administration. The public sector administration and leadership hold a responsibility to bring them about in all public sector institutions.

4.4. Situational (Contingency) 1960's

From the above theories it was concluded that no leadership theory is exceptional and fully distinguished from the rest (Khan *et al*., 2016). According to Klingborg *et al.* (2006) the situational leadership theory proposed that the social situation and subordinates' characteristics influence the leader characteristics necessary to be successful. Situational leadership therefore arose in reaction to the trait based leadership (Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2017).The situational / contingency theorist argue that leadership is shaped by a particular situation (Benmira and Agboola (2021), this means that leaders must be able to assess the context in which they operate.

Leaders are then required to further decide what style will suit the particular situation in the best way (Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2017). Hence the emphasis on being situational. The situational leadership theory is essential in the public sector administration as it emphasizes on proper situational analysis and adaption to prevalent circumstance or putting in place measures that responds to the existing conditions. For instance if an institution find itself with a workforce that lacks requisite skills a situational leader will (i) put in place transitional measure like outsourcing of skills; and (ii) adopt a capacity development for younger employees to ensure that the requisite skills are built within the institution.

4.5. Transactional, Transformational Theories (1990s) and Others (2000s)

The transactional theorist argue that the relationship between the leader and the followers is premised on a reciprocal relationship between the leader and the followers (which is the actual transaction). In this instance both parties are influencing each other (Khan *et al*., 2016). However, it is argued by Benmira and Agboola (2021) argue that transactional leadership is dependent on the ability of the leader to motivate followers. It is was earlier observed by Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) that transactional leadership is premised on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance; transactional leadership and it is a style of leadership in which the leader advocates for compliance of his followers using rewards and consequence management.

To this end, the focus of transactional theorists was shifted to the nature of engagement and relations between the leader, the followers, the situation and the system as a whole, with particular attention dedicated to the latent leadership capacities of followers (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). It became a great shift from the trait leadership theories as it then put emphasis on the followers and what their interest was than exclusively looking at what the leadership displays or possesses individually and collectively.

Motivation from transactional theories is in the extrinsic form. Leadership rewards (by contingents) good relationship and punish (by excerption) negative outcomes. Transactional leadership can play an important role in the public administration to motivate performance. However, the notion of punishing followers may result in poor or volatile working relationship within the workplace. The give and take relationship ensures that the followers are conscious of what is expected of them from their leadership. The rule of thumb will thus be creation of stronger communication channels to ensure continuous feedback.

On the other hand, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). The essence is to move the followers from one level of performance to another than maintain the status quo. According to Hay (2012) cited in Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) transformational leaders engages with followers, focus on higher order intrinsic needs, and raise consciousness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those needs can be responded to. The focus on the intrinsic desires marks a shift from the external drivers of the transactional theorist beliefs. Most importantly, in the realm of transformational leadership the leader ensures that followers see the outcomes of their work more important and valuable (Sirin *et al.*, 2018).

To this end, leaders have according to Klingborg *et al.* (2006) become more responsible to their followers, with a more spiritual or value or principle-based relationship between leaders and followers (intrinsic driven relationship). The gap between leaders and followers is gradually reduced. The element of fear is eliminated but emphasis became on mutual relationship and respect.

4.6. Eco Leadership Theories

The eco leadership theories represent a shift from individualistic characterization of leadership (Allen *et al.*, 2017) and introduces a process based leadership beyond the situational leadership. As result, Wielkiewicz and Stelzner (2005) defines leadership as a process that arises from the interactions among individuals which is translated into adaptive decisions and executive processes. The old physique, appearance and power based leadership has progressively lost relevance with the modern world and is insufficient to the present day

complexities faced by institutions (globalization, population growth, the information, global warming age etc.) (Allen *et al.*, 2017).

In sum eco leadership theorists proposed the following elements of eco leadership namely; (i) effective leadership processes involve temporary resolutions of a tension between the traditional industrial approach and the neglected ecological approach; (ii) specific leaders are less important than they appear because the ecological context is more important than what leaders decide to do; (iii) organizations are more adaptive when there is a diversity of genuine input into decision-making processes; and (iv) leadership itself is an emergent process arising from the human interactions that make up the institution (Wielkiewicz and Stelzner, 2005).

The four assertions from Wielkiewicz and Stelzner (2005) above represents a shift from the physical and trait elements of leadership to interdependence, feedback, systems and adaptation. It ushers in the importance of engagement between the leaders which was also displayed from situational leadership (which was a need based theory) with the emergent belief being fundamentally based on decision being made on the basis on interpersonal engagement, the environment where work is done and decision made on the basis of the ecology of the performance environment. The eco leadership theories are also emphasizing on the practical analysis of the institutional circumstances and resolving the prevalent conditions for the better of the institutional environment as a whole.

The eco leadership theories demand a dynamic and pragmatic public administration that analyzes environments, interact with followers and adapt their decisions and work design to the prevalent ecology. The essence of eco leadership is teamwork and the understanding of the participants within the workplace and the environment in which the work or institutional activities are performed. Public service leaders could use the eco leadership analysis to provide relevant tools and support mechanism for the delivery of institutional objectives. The principles of adaption and dynamic leadership displayed within the eco leadership discourse are important for the longer and sustained working relationship between institution, the followers and its leaders.

5. Traits of Leadership

Traits are according to Kanodia and Sacher (2016) and Madanchian et al. (2016:199) consistent and habitual thoughts, feelings, behavior, emotions and actions that are uniquely displayed by an individual apart from others. Traits are hallmarks of leadership, they are those things that elevates an individual above the others. The key defining element of traits is that they are not overnight item but only observed over time (Kanodia and Sacher, 2016). There are different traits of leadership identified by different authors.

Adair (2004) identifies seven traits of leadership namely; (i) enthusiasm; (ii) toughness; (iii) integrity; (iv) fairness; (v) warmth; (vi) humility; and (vii) confidence. Whilst Kapur(2020) identifies the following traits for leadership namely; (i) honesty and integrity; (ii) confidence; (ii) skills and abilities; (iii) commitment and passion; (iv) accountability; (v) delegation and empowerment; (vi) creativity and empowerment; (vii) empathy; (viii) resilience; (ix) emotional intelligence; (x) humility; (xi) transparency etc.

In addition Goleman (2011) identifies (i) self-awareness (emotional self-conscious and confidence); (ii) Self-management (self-control, adaptability, achievement, optimism and initiative); (iii) empathy; and (iv) social skills as key elements of leadership. From the above it is clear empathy, integrity, resilience / confidence are the common traits that can be taken from Adair (2004), Goleman (2011) and Kapur (2020). The empowering trait identified by Kapur (2020) is also emphasized by Yukl (2012).

Emotional intelligence is emphasized by Goleman (2011) and Kapur (2020) as leadership traits with the former emphasizing on a leader having a high degree of emotional intelligence. Leaders who have higher levels of emotional intelligence are more effective and achieve good performance feedback (Goleman, 2011). These traits of leadership identified above cannot be sufficiently observed overnight but over a period of time as it was observed by Kanodia and Sacher (2016) earlier. A good public administrator needs all the positive leadership traits to properly manage external customers and peers otherwise a risk of disruptive action is higher.

6. Attitudes of Leadership

The modern leadership discourse demands leaders who are patient and have coping mechanisms. Leadership should create space for risks and provide mechanisms for risk management (Allen *et al.*, 2017). A collaborative attitude from leadership is also essential for modern institutions. Hence Rost (1997) calls for a collaborative working relationship instead of an uncoordinated influence process from leader to followers.

7. Leadership Behaviors

Luttikhuis (2014) identifies, three critical leadership behaviors namely; (i) task-oriented; (ii) relation-oriented; and (iii) change oriented. These leadership behaviors are factored into the integrative model of leadership from the hierarchical taxonomy of leadership. In addition Klingborg *et al*. (2006) identified four important behaviors attributed to the leader namely (i) directive (task-oriented); (ii) achievement-oriented; (iii) supportive; and (iv) participative. Change oriented leaders are open to new things thus providing an opportunity for innovative behavior by followers or subordinates. Openness to innovation is an essential behavior of leaders. As a result de Jong and Hartog (2007) argues that capitalizing on employees' ability is the best way to ignite innovation within the institution. The emphasis on being task oriented by both Luttikhuis (2014) and Klingborg *et al.* (2006) is essential in the public administration as it will ensure that all planned task are performed and targets are achieved.

8. Leadership Types

There are different types of leadership or ways in which leaders lead (Goleman, 2011) and Luttikhuis (2014).These include; (i) authoritative; (ii) coaching; (iii) affiliative; (iv) democratic; (v) pacesetting; and (vi) coercive (Goleman, 2011). Indeed, leaders requires a variety of ways of leading. The initial types were only premised on three styles, namely; (i) Autocratic; (ii) democratic; and (iii) laissez faire. To this end the leadership style have been extended and new phenomenon like pacesetting and affiliative were added to the leadership styles.

However, Goleman (2011) suggest that the mastery of the four aspects above is essential for the success of leadership. In their study of situational leadership and its effectiveness in rising employee productivity based on a Northern Lebanon organization, Ghazzawi *et al.* (2017) concludes that leadership style possesses higher influence on the employee performance results. Leadership types are all important and they are applicable at different periods of leadership. The public sector administration requires dynamic leadership style that encompasses the variety of leadership style to ensure the institutional outcomes are achieved.

9. Leadership and Public Administration

Whilst, Sirin *et al.* (2018) holds a belief that leadership is the process of influencing people to realize specific goals by using methods of motivation in place of power or authority. There is always a question where administration approaches should be managerial or leadership orientated. It is our belief that leadership play a crucial in public administration management.

However, the managerial approach is seemingly losing ground whilst the leadership approach is receiving more attention. Yet, Klingborg *et al.* (2006) argues that effective leaders need to be both good managers and good leaders. Managers are still required to be (i) team builders; (ii) forever learning; (iii) get along with people; (iv) Honest; (v) dependable; (vi) competent; (vii) supportive; (viii) fair-minded; (ix))cooperative; (x) respectful; and (xi) motivating etc. These behaviors are equally required in leadership.

The popularity of leadership theory is also influenced by its ability to (i) motivates and inspires others; (ii) build potential in others; (iii) create an environment that fosters learning; (iv) collaboration, and fluid teamwork and attracts high performers (Klingborg *et al.*, 2006). These are hallmarks of good institutions that are desired by institutions. The emphasis of the management approach is to ensure that allocated targets are reported and accounted for.

10. Conclusion

Leadership is not static but dynamic. As a result, Western (2008) identifies four stages through which leadership has evolved, namely: (i) controller (scientific management based); (ii) therapist (human relations approach based); (iii) messiah leadership (transformational approach); and (iv) eco leader. These leadership transitions were reflected with the leadership theories on this paper. Leadership has become increasingly viewed not as the result of an individual efforts, but it is viewed as a collective and collaborative process (Kaufman, Kennedy and Cletzer, 2019).

Furthermore, public administration should continuously analyze the environment and adapt to changing circumstances. There has been a stronger shift from What Allen *et al.* (2017) classified as the hierarchical,

mechanical, authoritative leadership to transformation, adaptive and open leadership. Yet leadership, traits, attitudes and behavior plays an important role in the public sector administration and administration in general.

Leadership must be dynamic, adaptive, open, accommodative, be open to critical and positive feedback (Allen *et al*., 2017). Leadership traits, attitudes and behaviors should not be viewed in isolation of a single leader but emphasis should be placed on the working relationship between the leader, the followers and the actual work environment and delivery networks. In sum leadership traits attitudes and behaviors have a greater role in public administration. A stronger relationship has been displayed from each leadership element as it was unpacked above.

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