



Public University Leadership Styles Influence on Employees Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Nigeria

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Abstract

The significance of knowledge sharing among employees is to improve their responsiveness unpredicted situations. Effective leadership style impact employee knowledge-sharing behavior positively. The role of influential leaders in knowledge sharing is accomplished through enhanced social networks and technology. This paper identify gaps in knowledge on impact of effective leadership styles on employee knowledge-sharing behavior. The study adopts Critical Realist (CR) literature review to demonstrate knowledge management with leadership styles. The study unveiled the rationale behind leadership approach that enhanced employee intentions to share knowledge. The analysis revealed that transformational, transactional, and mentor leadership styles enhance employees' knowledge-sharing behavior. The study concludes that the relationship between knowledge-sharing behavior and leadership styles should be a premeditated one to prioritize employee development.

Keywords: Leadership styles, knowledge sharing, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, mentor leadership, team performance, team productivity

Introduction

The present research addressed the influence of effective leadership styles on knowledge-sharing behavior among line managers in organizations. Jolace *et al.*, (2014) ^[15] postulated that knowledge is an essential organizational asset, while Lauring and Selmer, (2012) ^[16] shared that knowledge sharing is considered as information flow among employees, facilitating the development of new information and knowledge within the organization. In a clear debate by Adetunji (2016), he intensified that knowledge aids employees in being more responsive in dealing with unpredicted situations, while Jolace *et al.* (2014) ^[15] argued that organizational functions are hindered from functioning effectively as knowledge-based organizations are impacted by their limited abilities of knowledge sharing. Hence, improving organizational performance was evidenced as an element that increases positive outcomes in organizations when knowledge-sharing behavior is adopted (Witherspoon *et al.*, 2013) ^[29], researchers relate knowledge-sharing behavior to increased creativity (Lei *et al.*, 2021) ^[18], improved team performance (Liu *et al.*, 2020) ^[19], reduced production costs (Ritala *et al.*, 2015) ^[24], and enhanced firm innovative behavior (Vandavasi *et al.*, 2020) ^[26]. As a result, it was evidence that organizations in different sectors and industries now leverage knowledge sharing to increase their competitive advantage within the markets they serve. The overall organizational performance is hinged on the effectiveness of

knowledge sharing between teams, individuals, and organizations.

Knowledge sharing is considered essential in organizational operations, as Anand *et al.* (2020) ^[3] suggest that the conversion of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge is a challenge due to employee unwillingness to share knowledge. Therefore, the inclusion of effective leadership styles that encompass knowledge management allows organizations to solve complex issues they face through collaboration and team activities. On one hand, it has been observed that effective leadership by line managers involves the provision of guidance, inspiration, and direction to their employees about knowledge sharing by nurturing the talents and strengths of their employees, thus building committed teams to achieve organizational goals. On the other hand, research shows that effective leadership is significant for increasing and improving organizational knowledge-sharing behavior by shaping how employees perceive the process. Hence, leadership styles can weaken or improve employees' willingness to share knowledge among themselves or with the organization (Darwin, 2017) ^[9]. Yukl, (2012) ^[30] shared that organizations often fail to efficiently manage their knowledge resources leading to fairness among employees to share knowledge.

Frost (2014) ^[10] purported that improving the business's competitive advantage has been linked with supportive leadership styles that have a positive connection with

knowledge management practices through delegating and accessing among the organizational employees with different leadership styles, which is considered effective in encouraging knowledge-sharing. Hence, Frost (2014)^[10] and Intezari *et al.* (2017)^[13] agree that the role of influential leaders in knowledge sharing is accomplished through enhanced social networks and technology. In a similar vein, Castañeda and Ignacio (2015)^[5] shared that strategic leadership behavior depends on the level of understanding the leader has of the core issues of the business and their relation to the organizational values. Le and Lei (2018)^[17] structural equation modeling established that effective leadership is expected to operate on a bi-level, futuristic, and tactical approach to increase the energy, drive, and enthusiasm of leaders within the organization, the model turns out to play a crucial role in creating employee commitment as the study proves. Peet (2012)^[23] also summarizes that influential and visionary leaders influence the organizational climate positively and are significant in providing clear direction. Therefore, effective leadership is paramount in influencing knowledge-sharing behavior among organizational employees by providing continuous support and ensuring that all parties involved know the outcomes and value of the knowledge management process.

Literature Review

Preliminary research found that although researchers have a proper comprehension of leadership style concepts, their interpretation varied across different elements in human endeavors such as social work, academics, businesses, politics et cetera. For instance, Veliu *et al.* (2017)^[27] suggest that leadership styles depend not only on individual personal attributes and characteristics but also on situational and environmental characteristics they are in. Pauliené (2012) findings were in line with Veliu *et al.* (2017)^[27] but earlier debate that variations in leadership styles are majorly influenced by cultural differences, as individuals have different assumptions and beliefs concerning characteristics considered effective for good leadership. Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015)^[2] contradict the argument by Pauliené (2012) and are supported by Veliu *et al.* (2017)^[27] suggesting that good leadership is defined by selfless devotion and strong character towards an organization. Amanchukwu *et al.*'s (2015)^[2] research is relevant to the present study as it introduces different leadership theories distinguishing leaders from non-leaders. Like Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015)^[2], Clinebell *et al.* (2013)^[8] regard leadership styles such as transactional and transformational leadership as effective in improving the overall commitment of employees toward the organization. Iqbal *et al.* (2015)^[14] provided an almost identical definition. They refer to effective leadership styles as the ability to adopt a style meeting the situational demands they are operating. Łukowski (2017)^[20] agrees with Clinebell *et al.* (2013)^[8] that innovation management is influenced by the adopted leadership style within the organization, such as transformational leadership, as it allows employees to contribute their sentiments and ideas freely. Based on these views, it can be said that adopting the right leadership style within an organization improves employee commitment.

Given the above, current literature shows that leadership styles significantly influence employees' performance, growth, and attitude in achieving organizational goals. In another research by Mohiuddin (2017)^[21], he highlights that the transformational leadership style positively influences employee execution compared to the transactional approach,

which is focused on the top management. In support of his findings, Saad *et al.* (2018)^[25] likened effective leadership style to one increasing employee engagement, which majorly influences employees' overall commitment, loyalty, performance, and productivity. Though Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014)^[22] come to an understanding with Mohiuddin (2017)^[21] and Saad *et al.* (2018)^[25], they approached the leadership styles concept from a wider perspective as they viewed job satisfaction and work environment as major factors of leadership style selection, leading to increased employee engagement and performance. Chandra (2016) echoes the findings by Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014)^[22] through a quantitative study linking employee performance, knowledge sharing, and job satisfaction to effective leadership styles. Organizations must improve the workplace environment through proactive and effective leadership styles to positively impact employee development (Chandra, 2016)^[6]. Wakabi (2016)^[28] synchronous a similar debate as Chandra (2016)^[6], they also regard leadership as a relationship in which an individual influences the actions and behaviors of other people, making it vital for organizations to attract and retain talented employees. Therefore, as Wakabi (2016)^[28] maintained, organizational leadership must encourage employees to work toward achieving organizational objectives. The findings presented in the above studies expose a direct association between effective employee functioning and leadership styles. Leadership style has been confronted with questions regarding effectiveness in organizations due to the invasion of globalization which has multi-faceted, and complex concepts of leading new challenges. Gandolfi and Stone (2016)^[11] advocate that despite the numerous leadership styles available, the philosophical servant leadership position is more effective in generating acceptable outcomes in organizations. Igbaekemen (2014)^[12] has similar arguments as Gandolfi and Stone (2016)^[11], noting that leadership style selection depends on the level and type of power the leader has over the employees. Igbaekemen (2014)^[12] considers power as an individual's capacity to influence others through controlling necessary resources. Differing from the argument presented by researchers (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016; Igbaekemen, 2014)^[11, 12], Ahmad and Umrani (2019)^[1] present that ethical leaders are considered moral, honest, fair, and trustworthy, embodying humane intentions, personality traits, and character of the leader in shaping employee behavior through intentionally promoting moral modeling, while punishing the contrary and rewarding exhibitions. The research by Ahmad and Umrani (2019)^[1] is appropriate to the current research study as it addresses the mediation role of green human resources management (HRM) and employee psychological safety influenced by leadership styles, which is linked to the research problem. Similar to Ahmad and Umrani (2019)^[1], Appelbaum *et al.* (2015)^[4] conclusion posits that organizations should adapt rapidly to dynamic environments through change, from small adjustments to major transformations, by adapting to the appropriate leadership styles. Chaudhuri *et al.* (2016)^[7] agree with Appelbaum *et al.* (2015)^[4] and Ahmad and Umrani (2019)^[1] that leadership styles, directly and indirectly, influence organizational outcomes by shaping employee behavior and attitude through change and regulating the mediators and experiences predisposing the employees to change respectively. Based on these arguments, it can be inferred that interactions between the leadership style and the organizational environment determine the outcomes of the change initiative.

Methodology

This study aims to examine how effective leadership styles influence knowledge-sharing behavior among employees in the university. The problem addressed throughout the current study was that although other factors influencing knowledge-sharing among employees have been discussed in depth, the leadership style's role in influencing employee knowledge-sharing behavior is still lacking enough coverage by scholars. The role of a critical realist is to uncover the cause of an event that is how effective are leadership styles adopted to employee willingness to share information within the organization. The current study adopted an inductive research approach with the claims that an inductive research approach allows the researcher to search for themes and patterns within the literature to uncover the cause of an event and offer justifications for the research problem being addressed (Adetunji, 2014).

The researchers adopted a survey approach to investigate the study in a public university. The population of the study was drawn from the university staff in two departments of the administration section (registry and bursary). The two departments were selected based on their duties and roles and they often change duties and responsibilities at the discretion of their departmental head or leader. Another justification is based on their involvement in routine activities and direct relationships with clients and students which requires knowledge sharing. Due to frequent or sessional transfer from one unit to another, the importance of studying their knowledge-sharing behavior becomes very imperative. The units within the departments include admissions, student affairs, human resources, exams, and records, likewise, the other departments include, student records, cash office, payment, and audit to mention a few. The departments were chosen to even out the reality of how leadership style impacts the knowledge-sharing behavior of staff and, likewise, to avert any form of bias concerning the population. A sample of 172 participants, representing 86 percent of the original population was used for analysis in the study. The analysis was conducted using descriptive Statistics, chi-square, and regression Analysis to establish whether there is any relationship between leadership style and knowledge-sharing behavior in line with the objective and hypotheses of the study.

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- Ho1:** Leadership style does not lead to differences in the Knowledge-sharing behavior of public university staff
- Ho2:** Variations in Leadership style do not lead to differences in the Knowledge-sharing behavior of public university staff
- Ho3:** Knowledge-sharing effectiveness does not vary among public university staff

Result and Discussions

Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the participants, while inferential statically tool of non-parametric statistics of chi-square was used to test the hypotheses in line with the objective of the study. The decision criterion for the

hypotheses tested was set at a 0.05 percent level of significance. The inference and the inferential statistical tool of relationship regression were used to establish the link between leadership style and knowledge-sharing behavior.

Participants Responses

For this public University, 200 different versions of the questionnaire were prepared and then distributed to the staff in the two departments (admission, student affairs, human resources, exams and records, student records, cash office, payment, and audit) of the selected Public University of which 172 representing 86% were completed and returned by the participants. Each participant answered only one version of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Characteristics	Participants Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30	60	34.6
	31-45	71	41.2
	46-60	45	24.2
	Total	172	100.00
Gender	Male	89	52.0
	Female	83	48.0
	Total	172	100
Educational Qualification	Post-graduate	17	9.9
	Degree	92	53.3
	Diploma	45	26.4
	SSCE	18	10.4
	Total	172	100.00

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 1 shows that a greater percentage of the participants fell within the group of staff required to share knowledge within their units as well as transferable knowledge. The finding suggested that participant's ages fell between the age bracket of 18-30 and 31-45 constituting 34.6% and 41.2% respectively. The remaining 44 or 24.2% are made up of the participant between 46 and 60 years. This, no doubt, would further justify our result since most of the responses were presumed to be emanating from those with the necessary encounter with the leadership styles and knowledge-sharing behavior.

The participant gender as displayed in Table 1 indicates that the males (52%) were more than the females (48%) which shows that males were more likely to work in the registry and bursary department of the university. Finally, the table shows that the education levels were fairly distributed. Virtually all the participants were educated with 53.3% having bachelor's degree certificates, 9.9% having their postgraduate Degree, Diploma holders about 26.4% and the remaining 10.4% possessing SSCE. These statistics further indicate that most of the participants had higher education and a relatively small percentage had at least a high school education necessary for the participants to have an informed knowledge of the subject of the study.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2: Participant’s awareness of whether leadership styles influence knowledge-sharing behavior

Category of Responses	Frequency	Percentage	X ² Value	Degree of freedom	Critical Value	Remark
Strongly agree	33	19	31.14	4	9.49	Significant
Agree	17	10				
Indifferent	20	12				
disagree	53	31				
Strongly disagree	49	28				
Total	172	100.0				

Source: Survey Date 2023

Table 2: expresses university staff's awareness of leadership styles if they influence knowledge-sharing behavior among colleagues. The survey revealed that 33 (19%) and 17 (10%) strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, 53(31%) and 49 (28%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively, of which only 20 participants or 12% were uncertain. This shows that most of the participants believed that leadership styles and practices have a significant impact on influencing the knowledge-sharing behavior of public university staff. The calculated chi-square value of 31.14 was far greater than the table of 9.49 at DF= 4 set at a 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The result shows that leadership styles significantly influence the knowledge-sharing behavior of any university staff.

Variations in Leadership style do not lead to differences in the Knowledge-sharing behavior of public university staff

Table 3: understanding knowledge of transformational leadership styles influences knowledge-sharing behavior among participants

Category of responses	Frequency	Percentage	X ² Value	Degree of freedom	Critical Value	Remark
Strongly agree	33	19	21.37	4	9.49	Significant
Agree	21	12				
Indifferent	24	14				
Disagree	55	32				
Strongly disagree	39	23				
Total	172	100.0				

Source: Survey Date 2023

Table 3, which is on awareness of whether the implementation of leadership styles does not influence staff perception of knowledge sharing in public university staff in Nigeria, reveals that 33 (19%) and 21 (12%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively while, 55 (32%) and 39 (523%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, while 22 participants or 14% were uncertain. This shows that the majority of the participants thought that the implementation of leadership styles does not influence participant perceptions of their public university staff in Nigeria. The calculated chi-square value of 21.37 was far greater than the table of 9.49 at df =4 set at a 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses were therefore rejected. The result shows that the implantation of leadership styles does not influence participant perception of their public university staff in the country.

Table 4: awareness of transactional leadership styles influence on knowledge-sharing behavior of participants

Category of responses	Frequency	Percentage	X ² Value	Degree of freedom	Critical Value	Remark
Strongly agree	32	19	23.13	4	9.49	Significant
Agree	24	14				
Indifferent	19	11				
disagree	51	30				
Strongly disagree	46	27				
Total	172	100.0				

Source: Survey Date 2023

Table 4, is on the perception of whether the implementation of leadership styles does influence customers’ perception of knowledge-sharing behavior. Reveal that 32 (19%) and 24 (14%) strongly agreed and agreed, respectively which, 51 (30%) and 46 (27%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, of which 19 participants, or 11% were uncertain. This shows that the majority of the participants believed that the implementation of leadership styles does influence customer perceptions of knowledge-sharing behavior. The calculated chi-square value of 23.13 was far greater than the table value of 9.49 at DF = 4 set at a 0.005 significance level. The null hypotheses were therefore rejected. The result shows that the implantation of leadership styles has significantly influenced customers’ knowledge-sharing behavior in the country.

Table 5: awareness of participants to what extent mentoring leadership styles influence knowledge-sharing behavior

Category of responses	Frequency	Percentage	X ² Value	Degree of freedom	Critical Value	Remark
Strongly agree	29	17	35.97	4	9.49	Significant
Agree	24	14				
Indifferent	18	10				
disagree	63	37				
Strongly disagree	38	22				
Total	172	100.0				

Source: Survey Data 2023

Table 5, is on the perception of whether the implementation of leadership styles does influence knowledge-sharing behavior. Reveal that 29 (17%) and 24 (14%) strongly agreed and agreed, respectively which, 63 (37%) and 38 (22%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, and 18 participants, or 10% were uncertain. This shows that the majority of the participants thought that the implementation of leadership styles does influence knowledge-sharing behavior. The calculated chi-square value of 35.97 was far greater than the table value of 9.49 at $df = 4$ set at a 0.005 significance level. The null hypotheses were therefore rejected. The result shows that the implementation of leadership styles has significantly influenced knowledge-sharing behavior in the university

Finally, to establish the link between CSR and knowledge-sharing behavior, five of the eight corporate social Knowledge Management Behavior dimensions (i.e management support, enjoying helping others, self-confidence, commitment to the system, monetary rewards) in the kinder, Liebenberg Domini (hereafter, KLD) index are selected. These five dimensions are chosen since they emphasize key drives to knowledge-sharing behavior.

To Test Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five (Ho5): there is no link between leadership styles and knowledge-sharing behavior, relationship multiple

regression analyses are computed. Table 6 details the result of the multiple regression analyses. First of all, a positive relationship between leadership style and knowledge-sharing behavior ($= 801$; $p=0.000$) is found, supporting H1. Related to management support, there is a positive relationship between leadership style and management support given to employees to share knowledge ($=727$; $p= 0.000$), Enjoy helping others ($=681$; $p=0.000$), Self-confidence ($=780$; $p=0.000$), Commitment to the system ($=427$; $p=0.000$) and Monetary rewards ($=622$; $p=0.000$) supporting Ha1, Ha2 Ha3, and Ha4. As to Job fulfillment, there is a positive relationship between leadership style and Job fulfillment, ($=615$; $p=0.003$), Management encouragement to share knowledge ($=594$; $p=0.005$), and Loyalty in the university ($=762$; $p=0.000$) supporting H3a, H3b, H3c. related to Motivates, there is a positive relationship between leadership style and Employee experience ($=782$; $p=0.000$) and Opportunities and recognition given to employees to share knowledge ($=629$; $p=0.001$) supporting Ha2, Ha3. To motivate knowledge-sharing behavior, there is a positive relationship between leadership style and Trust ($=654$; $p=0.000$), Opportunities ($=368$; $p=0.000$), and Knowledge-sharing recognition ($=588$; $p=0.000$). Lastly, there is a positive relationship between leadership style and Confidence to share past knowledge ($=777$; $p=0.000$)

Table 6: Multiple regression analysis results

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	Adjusted R ²	F-change	Model	Std	Beta
Knowledge sharing behavior	Leadership style	654	321.716	0.000	.810	0.000
Management support	Leadership style	524	137.74	0.000	727	0.000
Enjoy helping others	Leadership style	459	106.143	0.000	681	0.000
Self-confidence	Leadership style	605	190.929	0.000	780	0.000
Commitment to the system	Leadership style	176	27.397	0.000	427	0.000
Monetary rewards	Leadership style	382	77.758	0.000	622	0.000
Job fulfillment	Leadership style	346	11.567	0.000	615	0.000
Management encouragement	Leadership style	318	10.332	0.000	594	0.000
Loyalty	Leadership style	558	26.289	0.000	762	0.000
Employee experience	Leadership style	594	34.661	0.000	782	0.000
Motivates Knowledge-sharing behavior	Leadership style	368	14.419	0.000	629	0.000
Trust	Leadership style	415	34.289	0.000	654	0.000
Opportunities	Leadership style	130	23.2	0.000	368	0.000
Knowledge-sharing recognition	Leadership style	341	76.564	0.000	588	0.000
Confidence to share past knowledge	Leadership style	601	257.355	0.000	777	0.000

Source: computed by the authors

Major Findings

The major finding based on the analysis of the study revealed that there is a strong link between leadership styles and knowledge-sharing behavior as the study found that the implementation and practices of a leader have a significant influence on participants' willingness to knowledge-sharing behavior. Other finding reveals that management support is an intrinsic value to the willingness to share knowledge, they claimed that self-motivated individuals are more likely to share ideas. The study findings supported the view of Frost (2014) ^[10] and Intezari *et al.* (2017) ^[13] that the role of effective leadership style in knowledge-sharing behavior is to support staff to accomplish enhanced social networks and technology within and outside the workplace for organizational development. The study established a fundamental fact contrary to the study of Yukl (2012) ^[30],

who postulated that organizations often fail to efficiently manage their knowledge resources leading to unfairness among employees to share knowledge. The current study suggested that when staff has self-confidence little or less support is required of a leader to develop a knowledge-sharing behavior. The findings from the study further supported the debate raised by Castañeda and Ignacio (2015) ^[5] that strategic leadership behavior depends on the level of understanding the leader has of the core issues of the business and their relation to the organizational values. The finding from participants also shares that employee experience and commitment to the system will determine whether or not leadership style will motivate employees to knowledge-sharing behavior.

The study also found that leadership type will influence individual staff's decision to share knowledge if they enjoy

helping others. Some participants share that loyalty will be the utmost reason for knowledge-sharing behavior because they want the organization to expand, and they are concerned about their productivity and development. This was not too far from Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015) [2], and Clinebell *et al.* (2013) [8] who shared that leadership styles such as transactional and transformational are effective in improving the overall commitment of employees toward the organization development. Therefore, the gap in knowledge on whether or not the implementation of leadership styles influences staff perception of knowledge-sharing behavior reveals that 33 (19%) and 21 (12%) strongly agreed and agreed, respectively while, 55 (32%) and 39 (523%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, while 22 participants or 14% were uncertain. This was further evidenced in the study of Igbaekemen (2014) [12], who considers power and an individual's capacity to influence others through controlling necessary resources as a way of developing knowledge-share behavior. Likewise, Ahmad and Umrani (2019) [1] share that ethical leaders are considered moral, honest, fair, and trustworthy, embodying humane intentions, personality traits, and character of the leader in shaping employee behavior. This is relevant to the findings that monetary rewards, management encouragement, and motivation to share ideas are key to the leadership style adopted. The findings further share that trust, opportunities, recognition, and confidence are key to knowledge-sharing behavior through intentionally promoting moral modeling, while punishing the contrary and rewarding exhibitions. This was similarly analyzed by Appelbaum *et al.* (2015) [4] and Ahmad and Umrani (2019) [1] that leadership styles, directly and indirectly, influence organizational outcomes by shaping employee behavior and attitude through change and regulating the mediators and experiences predisposing the employees to change respectively.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, converting individual knowledge to organizational knowledge is a challenge to unwillingness to share knowledge therefore staff should be encouraged to cultivate the habit of sharing. Knowledge-sharing behavior should be seen as a norm within the organization context and for the survival of the business.

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