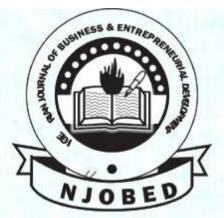
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A critical analysis of leadership competencies and organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions.

By

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Abstract.

Leadership competencies has become an issue of global concern to organizations. This may not be unconnected with vital role it plays in ensuring organizational productivity. Even in Nigeria, the mystery around leadership competences keeps recurring year after year. This study aims to examine the specific leadership competencies that influence organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions. By assessing the relationship between different leadership styles and organizational performance, identifying challenges hindering effective leadership, and proposing strategies to enhance leadership effectiveness, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on improving public sector performance in Nigeria. A content analysis method is employed. This conceptual paper advocates for further research into the development of leadership models tailored to the unique challenges of the Nigerian public sector. Future studies should explore how leadership competencies can be institutionalized through policy reforms, training programs, and structural adjustments. By advancing leadership discourse within the public administration sphere, this study contributes to the broader conversation on governance and institutional excellence in Nigeria.

Keywords: Leadership Competencies, Organizational

Productivity, Public Institutions



1.0 Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of public administration, leadership competencies are pivotal in steering organizations toward enhanced productivity and service delivery. In Nigeria, public institutions often grapple with challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and inadequate governance structures, which impede their performance (Owotemu et al., 2024). Effective leadership within these institutions is essential to navigate these challenges and foster an environment conducive to organizational success.

Leadership competencies encompass a range of skills, behaviors, and knowledge areas that enable leaders to effectively guide their organizations. These include strategic vision, decision-making acumen, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. The Fiedler Contingency Model posits that there is no one-size-fits-all leadership style; instead, effective leadership hinges on aligning a leader's style with the specific context and situational variables (Verywell Mind, 2024). This perspective underscores the importance of adaptable leadership in the complex environment of public institutions.

Organizational culture plays a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of leadership competencies. A positive culture that promotes accountability, transparency, and innovation can amplify the impact of effective leadership on productivity. Conversely, a toxic or rigid culture can stifle leadership initiatives and hinder organizational performance. Recent discussions highlight the prevalence of inadequate leadership and management in organizations, often rooted in insecurity and a desire for control, which can lead to negative workplace cultures and diminished productivity (Burnes, 2017).

Employee engagement serves as a vital link between leadership competencies and organizational productivity. Engaged employees are more committed, innovative, and motivated, contributing significantly to the organization's success. Leadership practices that foster empowerment, recognition, and well-being are instrumental in enhancing employee engagement, which in turn drives productivity (The Times, 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of leadership competencies, organizational culture, and employee engagement, Nigerian public institutions continue to face challenges in these areas.



Studies have shown that many leaders in these institutions lack the necessary skills and training, leading to poor performance and inefficiencies (Njoku & Adindu, 2014). Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of how leadership competencies influence organizational productivity, with a focus on the mediating role of employee engagement and the moderating effect of organizational culture.

1.1 Problem Statement

Leadership competency is a crucial determinant of organizational productivity, particularly in public institutions where efficiency and service delivery are often challenged by bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and poor governance structures. In Nigeria, the persistent decline in public sector performance raises concerns about the leadership capabilities of government officials and administrators. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2023), over 65% of public sector projects experience delays or fail to meet their intended objectives due to poor leadership and mismanagement. Similarly, Transparency International (2022) ranked Nigeria 150th out of 180 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index, indicating widespread governance failures that negatively affect institutional productivity.

Despite numerous leadership development initiatives, Nigerian public institutions continue to struggle with inefficiencies, policy inconsistencies, and low employee morale. Many studies have explored the role of leadership in organizational performance, but few have specifically examined how leadership competencies—such as strategic vision, decision-making, and adaptability—directly influence productivity in public institutions. Addressing this gap is crucial for formulating effective leadership development strategies that enhance governance efficiency and service delivery. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions, providing a conceptual foundation for leadership reforms aimed at improving public sector performance.

1.2 Background of the Study

The productivity of public institutions is a fundamental driver of national development, as it determines the efficiency of government service delivery and the effectiveness of policy implementation. However, in Nigeria, public institutions are often characterized by inefficiencies, delays, and resource mismanagement, raising concerns about the quality of

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leadership in the sector. According to the World Bank (2022), inefficiencies in Nigeria's public administration contribute to an annual loss of approximately 30% of the country's GDP due to corruption, policy failures, and bureaucratic delays. Additionally, the Nigerian Bureau of Public Service Reforms (2023) reported that over 70% of public sector employees believe that poor leadership is a major barrier to effective service delivery.

Leadership competencies—defined as the skills, behaviors, and knowledge required to lead organizations effectively—play a critical role in shaping institutional performance. Scholars such as Bass and Riggio (2014) argue that transformational leadership fosters innovation, employee commitment, and overall organizational efficiency. However, Nigerian public institutions often exhibit transactional or autocratic leadership styles, which hinder flexibility, creativity, and employee engagement (Ejumudo, 2020). Given the increasing complexity of governance challenges, there is a growing need to develop leaders with strategic thinking, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability to drive productivity improvements. This study aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the impact of leadership competencies on organizational productivity in Nigeria's public sector, offering insights into how leadership effectiveness can be enhanced to improve national governance outcomes.

2.0 Review of Related Literature.

Conceptualizing the Relationship between Leadership Competencies and Organizational Productivity.

Building on these theoretical insights, a conceptual framework can be developed to link leadership competencies with organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions. This relationship is mediated by factors such as institutional culture, policy implementation capacity, and employee motivation (Yukl, 2013). Research suggests that leadership competencies influence decision-making effectiveness, strategic leadership competencies enable public administrators to formulate and implement policies that drive institutional efficiency and workforce motivation and engagement. Transformational leaders foster a sense of purpose and accountability, enhancing employee performance and reducing bureaucratic inertia. Leaders who embrace adaptive competencies are better positioned to introduce reforms and drive continuous improvement (Denis, Langley & Rouleau, 2010).

This conceptualization highlight



This conceptualization highlights the dynamic interplay between leadership competencies and organizational outcomes, providing a foundation for future research and policy recommendations.

2.1Leadership Competencies in the Context of Public Institutions

Leadership competencies are widely regarded as fundamental drivers of organizational success, particularly within public institutions where efficiency, accountability, and service delivery are paramount (Bolden, 2016). Leadership competence encompasses a combination of skills, behaviors, and knowledge that enable leaders to guide organizations effectively (Northouse, 2021). While leadership has been extensively studied in private-sector organizations, its impact on public institutions remains a critical area of inquiry, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where governance structures often face systemic inefficiencies (Yukl,2013)).

Leadership competencies are at the core of organizational effectiveness, particularly in public institutions, where bureaucratic complexities, political dynamics, and stakeholder expectations shape operational efficiency. The ability of leaders to navigate these challenges through strategic decision-making, adaptability, and vision is central to driving organizational productivity (Northouse, 2021). In Nigerian public institutions, however, leadership is often criticized for inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of transformative impact on governance and service delivery. Understanding the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational productivity is therefore essential for reforming public sector administration and enhancing institutional effectiveness.

Leadership competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable leaders to influence teams, set strategic directions, and achieve organizational goals (Boyatzis, 2018). In the public sector, leadership extends beyond individual performance to broader organizational and systemic effectiveness (Van Wart, 2013). Studies have categorized leadership competencies into technical, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, each playing a unique role in shaping administrative outcomes.

Furthermore, ethical leadership has emerged as a crucial competency in the public sector. Studies indicate that ethical leadership enhances public trust, minimizes corruption, and fosters transparency in governance (Brown & Treviño, 2014). Nigeria's public institutions have historically struggled with issues of unethical leadership

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historically struggled with issues of unethical leadership, leading to systemic corruption and resource mismanagement (Transparency International, 2021). According to a report by the Nigerian Bureau of Public Service Reforms (2020), 72% of public sector inefficiencies are linked to poor leadership ethics and a lack of accountability mechanisms. Addressing this issue requires leaders who prioritize ethical decision-making, integrity, and accountability in public administration (Ojo, 2021)).

Another crucial leadership competency in public institutions is strategic thinking and vision-setting. Public sector leaders must be able to anticipate future trends, design long-term policy frameworks, and align institutional goals with national development priorities (Mintzberg, 2019). Nigerian public institutions often suffer from short-termism, where leaders prioritize immediate political gains over long-term institutional development (Okechukwu & Adeyemi, 2021). The lack of strategic leadership results in inconsistent policies, abandoned projects, and inefficient use of resources. Research by Amujo & Melewar, (2020) found that public institutions that integrate strategic leadership practices into governance structures experience higher levels of institutional stability and productivity.

Similarly, effective leadership in public institutions is closely tied to change management capabilities. Public institutions are inherently resistant to change due to bureaucratic rigidity and deep-rooted administrative cultures (Kotter, 2012). However, effective leaders must be able to drive organizational change, mobilize support for new policies, and ensure the successful implementation of reforms (Burnes, 2017). Studies have shown that Nigerian public institutions with strong change-oriented leadership tend to perform better in policy execution and service delivery (Akinwale, 2021).

2.2 Organizational Productivity and Its Determinants in Public Institutions

Organizational productivity in public institutions is typically measured by service efficiency, employee performance, and policy implementation success (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Unlike private organizations, where productivity is often linked to profit margins, public institutions focus on social impact, governance effectiveness, and citizen satisfaction (Aguinis, 2019). However, scholars argue that leadership remains a primary determinant of institutional productivity, influencing strategic vision, organizational culture, and employee engagement.

Organizational productivity in public institutions



Organizational productivity in public institutions refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which governmental agencies and other public sector organizations deliver services, achieve policy goals, and manage resources (Boyne, 2014). Unlike private sector organizations, where productivity is often measured in financial terms such as revenue and profit, productivity in public institutions is evaluated based on service delivery, policy implementation, transparency, and public satisfaction. This distinction makes productivity in the public sector a complex and multidimensional construct, influenced by leadership, institutional frameworks, bureaucratic efficiency, and governance structures (Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013).

A key determinant of productivity in public institutions is operational efficiency, which involves optimizing resource utilization, minimizing waste, and ensuring timely service delivery (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015). Studies have shown that inefficient bureaucracies, corruption, and poor leadership significantly hinder productivity in developing countries, including Nigeria (Adegoroye, G., & Olaopa, T., 2020). For instance, a report by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2022) revealed that over 60% of public sector projects in Nigeria experience delays due to inefficiencies in governance and administrative bottlenecks. Furthermore, the World Bank (2021) noted that weak public institutions contribute to a loss of approximately 30% of Nigeria's annual GDP due to mismanagement and inefficiency.

Scholars argue that bureaucratic rigidity is a major impediment to productivity in public institutions (Ostrom, 2019). Traditional bureaucratic structures in Nigeria are characterized by hierarchical decision-making, excessive red tape, and a resistance to change, which slows down innovation and responsiveness to public needs (Olowu & Ayo, 2021). A study by Akinwale (2021) found that 72% of Nigerian public sector employees believe that bureaucratic procedures negatively impact their ability to perform efficiently. As a result, there is growing advocacy for new public management (NPM) approaches, which emphasize performance-based assessments, decentralization, and customer-oriented service delivery (Hood, 2018).



2.2.1 Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement and Organizational Productivity.

Recent studies have delved into the intricate dynamics between leadership competencies, organizational culture, employee engagement, and organizational productivity. A notable study by Koranteng et al. (2022) examined how organizational culture influences the relationship between leadership styles and organizational efficiency in Ghana's banking sector. The researchers discovered that various leadership styles, including transformational and servant leadership, positively impacted efficiency. Importantly, they found that organizational culture significantly moderated this relationship, suggesting that a supportive culture can enhance the effectiveness of leadership on organizational outcomes.

In a different vein, Price (2023) emphasized the pivotal role of employee happiness in boosting productivity. He argued that leadership practices fostering empowerment, recognition, and well-being lead to heightened employee engagement, which in turn drives organizational productivity. This perspective underscores the mediating role of employee engagement in the leadership-productivity nexus.

Harmonizing these findings with the current study suggests a comprehensive model where leadership competencies directly influence organizational productivity, with employee engagement serving as a mediator and organizational culture acting as a moderator. In essence, effective leadership fosters an engaging work environment, leading to increased productivity. This relationship is further strengthened when embedded within a positive organizational culture. Therefore, for public institutions aiming to enhance productivity, it is crucial to develop leadership competencies that promote employee engagement and to cultivate an organizational culture that supports these initiatives.

2.2.2 Implications for Organizational Productivity

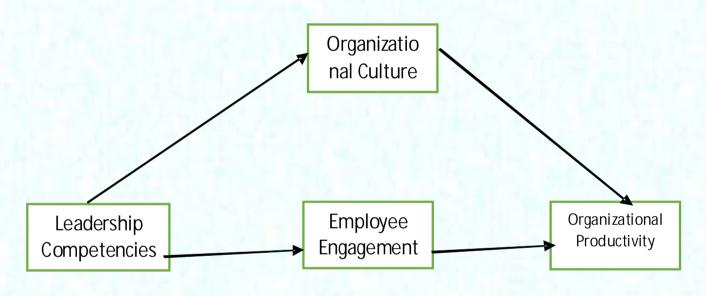
Leadership effectiveness directly influences various dimensions of organizational productivity, including employee motivation, policy implementation, and institutional efficiency (Obi C. 2019). Studies have shown that organizations with competent leadership experience higher employee engagement, lower turnover rates, and improved service delivery (Yukl, G. 2013). For instance, institutions that embrace transformational leadership tend to foster a culture of



accountability, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which enhances productivity in the long run (Bass, 1990).

Conversely, poor leadership can have detrimental effects on productivity. When leaders lack strategic vision, organizations become reactive rather than proactive, leading to inefficiencies in resource allocation and service delivery (Ojo, 2020). Furthermore, a culture of weak leadership may encourage corruption and ethical misconduct, further undermining institutional credibility and effectiveness (Olowu et al. 2019).

Conceptual Model



Researcher's Model (2025)

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership and Organizational Productivity

Leadership theories provide a foundation for understanding how different competencies influence organizational productivity. The transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and motivate subordinates toward achieving collective goals. Transformational leaders possess competencies such as vision, emotional intelligence, and strategic decision-making, which enhance organizational performance by fostering innovation and commitment (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

In contrast, transactional leadership, as conceptualized by Weber (1947) and later refined by Bass (1990), focuses on structure, rewards, and penalties to achieve efficiency. While



transactional leadership ensures compliance and procedural adherence, it may not always enhance employee engagement or long-term productivity. This raises questions about the applicability of different leadership styles in Nigerian public institutions, where rigid bureaucratic structures often inhibit flexibility and innovation (Eze, 2021).

Furthermore, the competency-based leadership model highlights the importance of core skills such as communication, adaptability, problem-solving, and strategic thinking in driving organizational effectiveness (Boyatzis, 2008). Given the complex nature of public administration, a leader's ability to navigate political dynamics, manage diverse stakeholders, and drive policy implementation is crucial for institutional success (Van Wart, 2017).

Various theoretical frameworks offer perspectives on the leadership-productivity nexus in public institutions. The transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) suggests that leaders who inspire and empower their employees tend to achieve higher productivity levels. This theory aligns with studies showing that Nigerian public institutions with visionary leaders report better service delivery and administrative efficiency (Okechukwu & Adeyemi, 2021).

Boyatzis (1982) emphasizes that effective leadership depends on a combination of cognitive, emotional, and social intelligence. In public institutions, this model suggests that leadership training should focus on adaptability, strategic foresight, and ethical decision-making (Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Morse & Swan, 2011).

3.0 Methodology

This study employs a conceptual research design to explore the relationships between leadership competencies, organizational culture, employee engagement, and organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions. A comprehensive literature review serves as the primary method for data collection, drawing from scholarly articles, books, and reputable online sources.

The literature review focuses on recent studies that examine the impact of leadership competencies on organizational productivity, with particular attention to the roles of organizational culture and employee engagement. Sources are selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Databases such as JSTOR, PubMed, and Google Scholar are utilized to access peer-reviewed articles and publications.



The analysis involves synthesizing findings from the reviewed literature to identify common themes, patterns, and gaps. The study examines how different leadership competencies influence organizational productivity, the mediating role of employee engagement, and the moderating effect of organizational culture. By integrating insights from various studies, the research aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of these relationships within the context of Nigerian public institutions.

4.0 Discussions

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions, it has some limitations. First, as a conceptual paper, it relies on existing literature rather than primary empirical data, which may limit its ability to capture real-time leadership challenges in specific Nigerian institutions. Additionally, leadership and productivity are influenced by multiple external factors, such as political instability, economic fluctuations, and technological advancements, which this study does not extensively address. Another limitation is the generalization of leadership competencies across different public institutions; what works in one sector may not necessarily apply to another due to variations in institutional structures and organizational cultures. Lastly, while global leadership theories are referenced, the study does not deeply explore indigenous leadership models that may offer alternative insights into improving productivity in Nigeria's unique socio-political context.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should consider conducting empirical studies to validate the conceptual relationships discussed in this paper. Quantitative and qualitative studies that examine specific leadership competencies in various Nigerian public institutions could provide more nuanced insights into their impact on productivity. Additionally, future studies could explore how political influences, cultural dynamics, and digital transformation affect the leadership-productivity nexus in public administration. Comparative studies between Nigeria and other developing economies could also help identify best practices and adaptable leadership models. Finally, investigating the role of emerging leadership styles, such as servant leadership and



ethical leadership, in enhancing public sector productivity could offer fresh perspectives on leadership development strategies in Nigeria.

5.0 Conclusion

Leadership competencies are fundamental to improving organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions. While existing literature underscores the role of transformational leadership, competency-based models, and public value management in shaping institutional effectiveness, a conceptual approach is necessary to fully understand this relationship. By framing leadership as a strategic resource, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on governance reform and public sector performance in Nigeria. Future research should further explore how leadership competencies interact with environmental and structural variables to influence long-term institutional productivity.

The relationship between leadership competencies and organizational productivity in Nigerian public institutions remains a crucial area for scholarly and policy-oriented discussions. Existing literature underscores the significance of transformational and competency-based leadership in enhancing institutional performance, yet challenges such as political interference, bureaucratic rigidity, and inadequate leadership development persist. Addressing these challenges requires a paradigm shift towards a competency-driven leadership framework that emphasizes strategic thinking, adaptability, and ethical governance.

Leadership competencies in the public sector encompass a wide range of capabilities, from strategic decision-making to ethical governance and change management. The Nigerian public sector continues to face significant leadership gaps, which hinder institutional productivity and governance effectiveness. Strengthening leadership competencies through targeted training, ethical accountability, and strategic



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