

## Effects of leadership influence on labour management relations: case study of Ebonyi State University, southeastern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This work identifies the causes of inefficiency and the challenges of leadership influence on labour management relations with case study of Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Nigeria. In the study, descriptive survey design was adopted. The research was carried out on a randomly selected sample of 678 teaching staff and labour union members of EBSU. Data collected for the study were analyzed using simple percentage and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Findings from this study indicate that there is a significant effect of leadership influence on labour management relations. It shows a significant effect of labour leadership influence on the management of trade unions like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), and the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU) in the case study. The paper therefore recommends that the management of labour unions in state-owned universities in developing countries should be detached from the influence of the government and the university principal officers. Labour unions should be allowed to operate as a single entity representing and protecting the interest of their members devoid of unnecessary influence by the university management. We infer that labour management relations in state-owned institutions in the region has been politicized on the ground of tribe (ethnic consciousness), religion, sex, and interest sharing among various groups within the management team and this attitude should be discouraged.

**Keywords :** Leadership, Influence, Labour, Union, Management, Relations, University

### INTRODUCTION

The growth of any state or institution is a function of its leadership and leadership influence. Leadership in this context is a process of influencing, directing and coordinating the activities of other people in an institution with a particular style geared towards the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives. The etymology for the style of leadership approach was believe that effective leadership influence utilizes a particular style to lead individuals and the nations towards attaining its basic tasks. Hence, leadership is absolutely essential for the survival of group organizations [26], [30]. Leadership influence is a central element of institutional management. It is one of the indispensable parts of management approach in directing the members of that organization and utilizing their potentials towards the accomplishments of institutional goals and objectives. The degree, to which organizational memberships utilizes their aptitudes and abilities in the relationship, is predicated on how institutional leadership and leadership influence appreciates the presence of various labour unions and organizations in the institution thereby averting cases of industrial disputes and strikes over wages and conditions of service [25].

Hartnett [20] asserts that participative leadership influence devoid of all kinds of restrictions on grounds of race, sex and religion and co-operative labour management relations enhances effective service delivery in public institution. Effective leadership influence in institutional management emphasis the process of utilizing the potentials of workforce in an effi-

cient and effective manner aimed at achieving the goals and objectives of that institution. Silins [37] observed that transformational leadership approach facilitates collaboration among the groups and changes the structural processes of the institution and thus contributes to the performance of the institution. This implies that institutional leadership is concerned with structural relationship that brings about institutional coherence in a systematic process that gains maximum cooperation and enhances participation between the employer and workers in the organization. Ojonemi; Onechojon, & Attai [31] opines that labour unions representatives have lacked behind in the process of labour management relations as it has failed to change itself into a dynamic and result oriented agents in public organizations. This process of change can only be achieved by adopting good and result-oriented leadership influence, identifying opportunities, setting strategic directions, and investing resources to enhance human capabilities and improve institutional goals and objectives. Notably, a plethora of studies on the nature of industrial relations system and trade unionism exists [6], [35], [18], [5], but this paper argues that most trade unions in Nigeria public institutions has failed because of ineffective leadership influence and management between the workers representatives and management teams. This is because, the extant research movement on labour management relations emphasizes the need to place greater attention on the principles that will sustain employee involvement, harmonious employer - employee relations and mechanisms, and on practices that stimulate their activities in

workplace organizations. The place of leadership influence is critical in understanding the level of administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions and in the overall management of university education system in Nigeria democracy. This leadership approach can be seen from two different perspectives which include the external management influence exercised by the federal government under the control of the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the internal levels of administration that is made up of the visitor known as the President if is a Federal institution, and the Governor in State institutions, the Pro-Chancellor, Senate, and other university management teams such as the Vice Chancellor, Registrars, principal officers and the governing council members of the institution [16].

Ebonyi State University system since creation in 1996 in Abakaliki, Nigeria, has witnessed a lot of turbulent experiences, arising from leadership problems and general administrative reasons. The major challenge of the institution has been attributed to poor funding, bad leadership style and influence, increase in students admission, inadequate infrastructures, an evolving culture of tribalism and ethnic consciousness in managing the institutions, ceaseless students riots and strike actions by the staff and unions leaders, etc. all perceived efforts in resolving this leadership menace resulted into a serious crisis between the government, labour unions and university management team. Moreover, political influence in the appointment of university principal officers, promotion of staff (including labour union representatives) and general recruitment process has truncated the attainment of a functional labour union body due to the fact that university management lacks participatory leadership influence and approach in its leadership style [40]. Consequently, many management-labour crises had arisen due to misunderstanding and misinformation. This is complicated by the fact that there is no formal forum for the management/leadership and employees to discuss on their mutual interests. Ebonyi State University, (EBSU), has experienced occasional industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), and other labour unions such as Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU), arising from the fact that they are not informed of certain management decisions and bad leadership styles adopted by the management. Appointment of Dean/ HODs and other vital decisions are sometimes, unilaterally done by management without recourse to the subsisting laws/ the staff views. This unpleasant development had made it challenging for the staffs to work towards institutional goal attainment [40].

## THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

The term leadership means different things to different people. Basically, leadership reflects the assumption that involves an influence process whereby the leader exercise some levels of control over his followers in a formal or informal platform to accomplish a specific tasks [30]. Cole [12] asserts that leadership is a dynamic process in a group relationship using a specific organizational influence in achieving group objectives

freely. The managerial context implies the ability to Influence individuals and groups to work towards attaining organizational goals with the most judicious and economic use of all resources at the disposal of the group. However, developing or emerging economies, particularly in Africa, are characterized by poverty and deprivations which could be attributed to poor managerial leadership in both public and private sectors. Buhari [9] observed that, there is noticeably lack of leadership everywhere in the world; not just political leadership but also social, organizational, spiritual, national and international. Leadership is an element of management that is not demonstrated by all leaders. Olowookere & Elegbeleye [29]. There are several distinct theoretical bases of leadership. Initially, leaders were felt to be born not made. However, empirical studies have confirmed that emergence and effectiveness of a leadership is situational. Thus a leader is viewed as a product of the times and the situations. The person with the particular qualities or traits that a situation requires will emerge as the leader. Stoner & Gilbert [38] leadership is of utmost importance in organizational success. Although employees can and do shape group activities in a number of ways, the leader nonetheless wields more power than the group. Therefore the exercise of power and authority should be done in a manner that satisfies the groups and organizations. Power implies the ability to exert influence and change the behavior, direction and actions of a group [38]. Effective leadership influence encompasses the process of accomplishing goals with or through people. Chemers [11] asserts that a leadership style is a leader's style of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people towards achieving the goals of the institution. Stogdill [39] sees leadership as the process of influencing activities of organized groups towards attainment of the group's and organizational efficiency depends on value of its leadership influence. Fielder [19] defines leadership effectiveness as success of the leader in achieving the organization's goals. To be effective, the leader focuses on the persons in the group to fulfill their wishes. Effective leadership influence surmounts various groups challenges based on the power he owns.

The greatest frequently used principle of leadership effectiveness is the degree to which organization performs its job(s) effectively and accomplishes its goal(s). Effective leadership influence is essential in executing groups' strategies and developing strategically appropriate relationship in the organization. Leadership style and pattern is a reaction to an institutional problem of the university management in relation to labour management. Adoption of transformational leadership style by most institutional leaders wields positive but insignificant effect because workers representatives might observe changes in the organization as a problem of bad leadership influence on the management team and therefore reduce their input, job satisfaction, productivity and thereby withdrawing their performance in the organization [24].

## Labour Management Relations: A Conceptual Discourse

In recent years, and following the industrial revolution which

created the modern employment relationship after the 19th century, labour management relations have attracted the attention of many scholars arising from the decline and practice of trade unions and the need for industrial peace and harmony. Labour management relations was organized with a strong problem-solving approach that rejected both the classical economists' laissez faire solutions to labor problems and the Marxist solution of class revolution. It is this approach that underlies the New Deal legislation in the United States, such as the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act (Wikipedia).

A definition by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveals that Industrial relations deals with either the relationship between the state, employers and workers organization or the relation between the organization. Labour management relations refer to the formal relationships that exist in the institution between the workers and the management team who represents the owners (employers) of the organization or institution and the government, but the poor relationship that is seen negatively affects goal accomplishment [34]. These labour unions are made up of various associations formed, organized and managed by the employees in the institution through their representatives with the principal purpose of using them to protect their interest and aspirations in the institution. This formal association covers the contractual relationship between the employer and the employees, regulation of conditions of service, collective bargaining, management of strikes, industrial democracy, trade unions-employer relations, and structural decisions by the employer on how to relate well with individual employees and their trade unions in the workplace [14], [1], [7], [28].

Prior research in the field of industrial and human resources management reveals that labour relations are faced with some inherent conflicts of interest between employers and employees unions which symbolize a natural part of the employment relationship in developing countries [13]. In line with the theory of postmodernism, economic policy framework and organizational behavior, scholars posit that the practice of labour management relations in this 21st century is in crisis and therefore giving birth to a deteriorating trade unionism [10], [22]. Hence, the industrial relations emphasis on institutional intervention is undermined by a neoliberal emphasis on the laissez faire promotion of free markets in the process of policy-making. Essentially, labour management relations should be seen as an integral part of institutional management as changes in leadership approach and styles within an organization are often affected by management perceptions towards workers and their unions. Within the purview of Taylors theory of scientific management and the practice of organizational behaviour as seen in public sector organizations, most autocratic leaders assumes that workers are mere cog in the organizational structure since they lacks creative ability, intelligence and wisdom which is contrary to the principles of close supervision, specialization, effective communication, consultation and participation of a human-oriented management system that promotes sound industrial relations is lacking. Thus, changes in labour management relations are products leadership influence, attitudes and management practices that encourages the spirit of team work in the

organisation. This approach therefore presents a critical position for an effective and harmonious industrial relations system that is free from crisis in institutional management [33].

Hence, an understanding of the various institutional arrangements and mechanisms that characterizes the employment relationship is therefore predicated on the influence exercised by various labour union leaders and representatives in the process of industrial harmony owing to the fact that the institution comprising the management and trade unions are perceived as being made up of powerful and divergent sub-groups, each with its own legitimate loyalties and with their own set of objectives and leaders. An effective labour management relation increases the quality of service delivery in the institution, improves productivity and reduces industrial accidents [20]. Accordingly, Anto [4] observed that the knowledge of labor management relations is aimed at achieving positive significant relationship between subordinates and supervisors for a harmonious and result-oriented administration in the organization. Traces of misunderstanding and conflicts in the form of strike and other industrial action by trade unions is therefore seen as an inevitable factors arising from the nature of leadership influence that is in existence between the trade union leaders and the management team or their representatives in the institution. This is because workers perceive bad leadership influence as exploitation by the employer(s) if the organization fails to adopt a participatory approach in their decision making. Good and sustained labour management relations increase the morale of the employees. Employees work with great zeal with the feeling in mind that the interest of employer and employees is one and the same, i.e. to increase production. It makes all the worker feels that he is a co-owner of the gains of company or institution. The employer in his turn must realize that the gains of industry are not for him along but they should be shared equally and generously with his workers. In other words, good leadership influence and action is the key accomplishment of industrial peace and reduces the level of industrial disputes since labour conflict is unavoidable in organizational life but rather could be curtailed, sidetracked, managed and resolved [21].

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data was analyzed based on appropriateness of statistical tool. The statistical tool used in this research is the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test and reliability analysis scale via Special package on Social Sciences (SPSS). The level of significance was at 0.05.

The results for the study are presented in the following tables:

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant effect of leadership influence on labour management relations in Ebonyi State University.

**Table 1:** ANOVA-Test of Participatory Leadership Influence on labour management relations in Ebonyi State University

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean square	F-ratio	Probability P-value
Between people	864.8640	231	3.7440		
Within people	267.6816	1392	.1923		
Between measure	30.6258	6	5.1043	29.8497	.0132
Residual	237.0558	1386	.1710		
Total	1,132.5456	1623	.6978		
Grad mean	3.6611				

Source: Empirical Analysis of Data 2011

Reliability coefficients:

N of cases = 232.0      N of items = 8  
Alpha = .9743

Table 1 shows P- value  $0.0132 < 0.05$ , indicating that there is no significant difference between the mean scores, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and then accept the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant effect of leadership influence on labour management relations in Ebonyi State University. The analysis therefore went further to show that this result is 97% reliable.

**Hypothesis Two**

There is no significant effect of leadership influence on institutional management of trade unions in Ebonyi State University

**Table: 2:** ANOVA-Test of Leadership Influence on Institutional Management of Trade Unions

Sources of varia-	Sum of squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean square	F- ratio	Probability P-value
Between people	884.0832	231	3.8272		
Within people	307.9104	1624	.1896		
Between measure	36.6268	7	5.2324	31.1824	.0032
Residual	271.2836	1617	.1678		
Total	1,191.9936	1855	.6426		
Grad mean	3.6611				

Source: Empirical Analysis of Data 2011

Reliability coefficients:

N of cases = 232.0      N of items = 8  
Alpha = .9843

The P- value  $0.0032 < 0.05$  is shown in the analysis on table 2 which shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and then accept the alternative hypothesis that there is existence of relationships between leadership influence and institutional management of Ebonyi State University. The analysis therefore went further to show that this result is 93% reliable.

**DISCUSSION**

From the findings, we observed that the relationship between labour and management has not been cordial and effective and that lack of employee participation in decision making affects positive labour management relations in Ebonyi state university. Discovered also was that, the politicization of state owned institution on grounds of tribe, religion and sex and lack of institutional capability of the South-East Governors to implement ASUU/FGN agreement of July 2009 led to the 6 months strike embarked upon by South - East branch of the union (ASUU) on July 23, 2010 over the non-implementation of the consolidated University Academic Salary Structure (CONUAS), which also affected negatively as it paralyzed academic activities in Ebonyi State University since the management lacks due consultation with labour unions. This was in line with the outcome of test of hypothesis 1 as shown in table 1 that unveiled p-values of  $0.0132 < 0.05$  up-

holding no significant difference between the mean scores of the results. The effects of leadership style on labour management relations in Ebonyi state university was corroborated with the studies of Ekong [15] which posits that over 80% of the strikes and industrial action in Nigerian institution was seriously associated to the aggression between labour unions and the employer on the nature of their conditions of service and therefore establishes the need for a bottom-top leadership approach in labour management relations for enhanced productivity and harmonious relationship between the university management team and labour union representatives. The result, also agrees with the position of Owolabi and Chukwuma [32] that most leaders are autocratic and do not do much consultation with their employees (unions) in the process of university administration.

From table 2, observation had it that leadership influence of Ebonyi state university has negative influence on its institutional management and that leadership style and pattern is a reaction of an institutional problem of the university. Discovered also was that bad leadership influence has negative impact on institutional management and that the leadership administration of Ebonyi state university has adopted both democratic and autocratic style of leadership pattern in her general university administration and management. Indeed, these corroborated with earlier study of Aminu [3] that the pitiable situation of facilities in the institution and other social vices are as a result of poor and incompetent leadership influences has challenged institutional goal attainment and employees development in the university community. In the test of hypothesis two using table 2, result shows that there is significant relationship between leadership influence and institutional management of Ebonyi state university with 98% reliability.

However, the struggle for effective leadership influence in Institutional management can therefore be achieved through the application of the democratic style of leadership and transformational leadership approach in university governance. This is because, the democratic or participative style of leadership is the most suitable, reliable and dependable instrument for effective labour management relations and the overall attainment of institutional development since the followers, (labour union members and representatives) and staff of the institution contribute and help in formulating policy decisions, they would support it and work hard to make it work because it is their own idea and contributions towards national development.

## CONCLUSION

Effective leadership influence in managing labour relations is a sine-qua-non in addressing problems in the form of various workplace disputes between employers and labor unions, strikes, and lockouts in order to promote justice, efficiency, and a sustaining relationship between the groups as well as to foster proactive remedies and solutions on the problems in the institution. Thus, in a bid to achieve a sustainable peace and  
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industrial harmony in all institutions, it therefore becomes very vital for the government to get involved in the management of labour relations to ensure that the appropriate atmosphere is created for all aspects of labour relations matters and unions to thrive. A good and proactive leadership quality and influence should be encouraged in the workplace between the workers and the management team who represents the institution. Thus, it is evident that good leadership influence is the basis for a harmonious labour relations management and results in increased efficiency of workers in the institution. This is because industrial peace lies ultimately in a transformed approach adopted by the management and the unions. This requires a transformational leadership influence and traits among workers representatives, and government (institutional management teams) to consolidate a new relationship in consonance with the spirit of esprit de corps and true democracy. Both should consider themselves as partners of the institution and the role of workers union in such a partnership should be recognized. Moreover, employees must recognize employer's authority and relationship for improved productivity in the organization. The results showed that the institutional management of Nigerian university has positive relationship with its leadership style and that effective leadership style and pattern is a challenge on institutional management in the overall achievement of set objectives. In the same vein, good and effective labour management relations has significant relationship with the type of leadership style adopted by the leader using due consultation technique and workers participation in decision making.

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