

" EXPLORING THE NEXUS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN MAURITIUS "

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the critical importance of employee motivation in contemporary settings, government agencies and businesses alike are actively prioritizing strategies to boost staff morale. A central determinant of success in this endeavor is the leadership style adopted by managers, influencing their ability to inspire and effectively lead teams. This research is specifically focused on identifying the most effective leadership style within the public sector of Mauritius, with a primary objective of elevating employee motivation levels. Employing both descriptive and explanatory research strategies, the study utilizes a quantitative approach to provide numerical insights into the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation. The target population consists of public sector employees in Mauritius. Pearson Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression tests demonstrated significant positive correlations between leadership styles and employee motivation. Transformational leadership demonstrates a robust positive correlation, along with transactional leadership. Surprisingly, laissez-faire leadership also exhibits a positive correlation, suggesting autonomy may enhance motivation. Democratic leadership has a high positive correlation, and unexpectedly, autocratic leadership shows a positive correlation, challenging conventional perceptions.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Employee Motivation, Public Sector, Mauritius

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, boosting staff motivation has become crucial for government agencies due to the competitive business climate. Effective managerial leadership is viewed as key for organizational goal recognition and staff productivity. This study focuses on leadership styles and employee motivation in the public sector of Mauritius. The study's objectives are to assess employee motivation, analyze the relationship between leadership style and motivation, identify the most influential leadership style, and provide recommendations for effective leadership in the public sector. The research aims to fill

the gap in the literature, especially considering the unique cultural and economic context of Mauritius. Existing literature highlights the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation, but there is a lack of empirical evidence in the context of Mauritius, particularly in the public sector. This study intends to bridge this gap by examining the connection between leadership style and employee motivation. The study aims to contribute valuable insights for both academia and practice, helping policymakers, public administrators, and business leaders enhance morale and productivity in the public sector of Mauritius.

LITERATURE REVIEW

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a complex and diverse phenomenon with varying definitions. Researchers, such as Jabbar and Hussein (2017), view leadership as the ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to organizational effectiveness. Buble et al. (2014) define leadership as the process of motivating, influencing, and guiding individuals toward common objectives, emphasizing the creation of team spirit. Nawaz and Khan (2016) describe leadership as the art of getting others enthusiastic and committed to attaining goals. Arnold (2017) emphasizes the multifaceted nature of leadership, linking it to the success of the company as well as the happiness and inspiration of its individual parts.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is crucial, linked to performance, compensation response, and other HR challenges. Osabiya (2015) emphasizes the critical role of motivation in today's dynamic and competitive market, involving internal traits and external factors such as job factors, personality differences, and organizational practices. Kuswati (2020) describes motivation as the need for work and expectations, influenced by various workplace elements. Internal and extrinsic incentives, including fair pay, leadership, trust, and organizational loyalty, contribute to employee motivation (Al et al., 2017).

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)

SDT, by Deci and Ryan (2017), focuses on fulfilling individuals' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation, where people are naturally drawn to tasks, is a key concept. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are crucial for increasing intrinsic motivation. SDT offers a theoretical basis for examining how leadership styles impact workers' autonomy, competence, and connection.

EXPECTANCY THEORY

Vroom's Expectancy Theory states that individuals take specific actions expecting favorable rewards or outcomes. Expectancy, instrumentality, and valence are key components. Leaders affect employees' expectations by clear communication, fair reward systems, and catering rewards to individual preferences. Expectancy Theory provides insights into how leadership styles in the public sector can influence employees' expectations and outcomes.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Employee motivation is vital for business success. Leaders must understand changing workplace motivations. Key elements include employee needs, working environment, responsibility, supervision, fairness, effort, feedback, and rewards (Marczak and Yawson, 2021). A positive work atmosphere encourages goal-driven work, with incentives, rewards, and status playing a role in motivation (Diskiene et al., 2019).

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership, as defined by Conger (1999), focuses on inspiring and motivating followers. Leaders aim to transform followers' goals and vision into a cohesive team, fostering loyalty

and dedication. Transformational leadership enhances employee job satisfaction, productivity, and retention (Ghasabeh et al., 2015).

TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transactional leadership assumes people are driven by reward and punishment. It emphasizes clear tasks, explicit authority, and a focus on maintaining the status quo. A transactional leader is more of a manager, closely monitoring productivity. Rewards and punishments drive performance (Jensen et al., 2019).

LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP

Laissez-faire leadership allows autonomy and minimal instructions. Effective for experienced employees, it can lead to positive outcomes and increased motivation (Wong and Giessner, 2018).

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

Democratic leaders share decision-making and facilitate group discussions, promoting individual self-esteem. Members have a role in helping the group attain its goals, fostering a participative environment (Devi and Subiyantoro, 2021).

AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

Authoritarian leaders organize and define followers' responsibilities, relying on command and control. Effective in straightforward tasks with a high level of trust, it can lead to negative motivation if overused (Dyczkowska and Dyczkowski, 2018).

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

In examining the intricate relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation in the public sector, this study formulates hypotheses based on established theoretical frameworks. Guided by the principles of transformational leadership, the first hypothesis posits that transformational leadership significantly influences the motivation of public sector employees. Building upon Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the second hypothesis asserts that transactional leadership is a determinant of employee motivation within the public sector. Considering laissez-faire leadership's hands-off approach, the third hypothesis explores its impact on motivating employees. The fourth hypothesis draws on democratic leadership principles, suggesting that a participative leadership style significantly influences employee motivation. In contrast, the fifth hypothesis challenges the conventional wisdom, proposing that autocratic leadership style does not exert a significant influence on the motivation of employees within the public sector. These hypotheses set the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the dynamics between leadership styles and employee motivation in the context of public administration.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a positivist philosophy method, consistent with a survey format using questionnaires, to investigate the interplay between leadership styles and employee motivation in the public sector, particularly within the Central Water Authority (CWA) of Mauritius (Žukauskas et al., 2018). Following the recommendations of researchers such as Williamson (2021) and Strom et al. (2018), the survey aims for accuracy and precision, leveraging the strengths of a positivist approach in revealing insights into complex organizational dynamics.

The research design integrates both explanatory and descriptive approaches, combining advanced statistical methods to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnected variables within the study domain (Myers et al., 2013; Marczyk et al., 2010). Building on the insights of Sileyew (2019), this

quantitative study utilizes an explanatory research design to unravel the complexities of how leadership styles influence employee motivation.

The research approach, aligned with Teherani et al. (2015) and Tuffour (2017), employs a quantitative method, emphasizing numerical data for a comprehensive comprehension of the catalytic role of numbers in organizational decision-making. Supported by Alase (2017), the study utilizes self-administered questionnaires to collect data, intending to subject it to rigorous statistical testing.

Focusing on CWA employees, the study justifies its target audience selection by highlighting the organization's significance in the context of water management and public service in Mauritius. The population size of approximately 1,200 employees is best represented by a sample size of 384, calculated using a formula that considers a margin of error (Šileika, 2019). The sampling strategy adopts simple random sampling to ensure a representative and unbiased selection process.

For data collection, the study leverages modern technology, utilizing a Google Forms-created online survey. This method, supported by Alshenqeeti (2014), Paradis et al. (2016), and Yaddanapudi and Yaddanapudi (2019), is chosen for its adaptability, cost-effectiveness, ease of management, and the ability to streamline data collection. A pilot study involving 10 CWA employees ensures the questionnaire's reliability and efficiency, paving the way for the official survey.

FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The gender distribution at CWA reveals a slight majority of women (53.6%) compared to men (46.4%), a factor that may influence the dynamics of leadership styles and employee motivation due to societal and workplace gender stereotypes. Age-wise, workers between 41 and 50 years old constitute the largest group (36.4%), followed by those aged 31–40 (24.8%). Understanding these demographics is crucial in the context of the study's focus on leadership styles and employee motivation, as different age groups often harbor distinct perspectives and sources of inspiration (Al et al., 2017).

Marital status is significant, with the majority being married (64.9%), indicating a workforce with serious relationships and families. Tailoring leadership to encourage autonomy within a supportive structure is crucial for this group, valuing a healthy work-life balance. The single demographic comprises 21.6%, possibly interested in professional and personal development, while 4% are in a relationship, requiring nuanced leadership strategies. The Divorced and Widowed groups, constituting 9.1%, respond well to compassionate, open, and tolerant leadership styles.

In terms of experience, a noteworthy percentage has less than a year of experience, suggesting either high turnover or continuous recruitment. Leadership should prioritize on-boarding and familiarization. Those with 1-5 years of experience (11.9%) may seek growth and acknowledgment, while those with over 20 years (2.8%) value leadership that recognizes their extensive institutional knowledge.

Regarding income, the majority falls within the MUR 12,000 to MUR 25,000 range (57.4%), potentially earning the minimum wage. Leadership for this group may need to address financial considerations. Those earning MUR 55,001 or more (12.2%) likely hold high-level roles, seeking leadership aligned with their skills and long-term goals for CWA. Understanding these demographic factors is crucial for tailoring effective leadership styles that resonate with the diverse workforce at CWA.

RELIABILITY TEST

The Cronbach alpha for the "Motivation" variable, which consists of four items, is moderate (.758). The internal consistency of the four-item "Transformational Leadership Style" and fouritem "Transactional Leadership Style" variables is high (Cronbach Alpha =.926 and .920, respectively). Cronbach's alpha values of .768, .857, and .867 for the "Laissez-Faire Leadership Style," "Democratic Leadership Style," and "Autocratic Leadership Style" variables indicate moderate to satisfactory internal consistency. Overall, the internal consistency of the study's variables is adequate to high, strengthening the reliability of the data and providing credibility to the analysis of the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

In order to determine the relationship between leadership style and the motivation of employees at CWA, this section of the chapter focuses on the testing of the research hypotheses. Having met the conditions that the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient should be more than 0.70, advanced statistical tests can now be carried out. It is worth mentioning that having assumed that the data is normally distributed, this section carries out a set of parametric tests. In this essence, composite variables are used to undertake the Pearson Correlation Test and the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

PEARSON CORRELATION TEST

The presented data in Table 1. reveals the correlation coefficients and associated significance levels between different leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic) and employee motivation.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Motivation
Transformational	Pearson Correlation	.732**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	319
Transactional	Pearson Correlation	.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	319
Laissez-faire	Pearson Correlation	.798**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	319
Democratic	Pearson Correlation	.839**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	319
Autocratic	Pearson Correlation	.840**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

	N	319
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Transformational leadership: The coefficient of correlation between transformational leadership and employee motivation is .732, which indicates a high positive correlation between these two variables. The correlation appears to be statistically significant at a 2-tailed significance, as indicated by the p-value which is .000. This implies that there is a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee motivation, meaning that when leaders demonstrate transformational attributes such as inspiration, vision, and empowerment, it tends to lead to higher levels of employee motivation. Conger (1999) identify these leaders as those who build a shared vision, promote employee autonomy, and motivate team members to go above and beyond in their work. This result is consistent with Ghasabeh et al. (2015) who advocated that transformational leadership inspires employees to become more invested in their jobs beyond a simply obedient attitude.

Transactional leadership: Employee motivation and transactional leadership have a high correlation coefficient of .648, showing a positive as well as a strong correlation. Again, a pvalue of f.000 indicates an extremely strong positive correlation between transactional leadership and employee motivation. This suggests that transactional leadership methods are also favorably correlated with increased employee motivation. Transactional leadership, as explored by Jensen et al. (2019), places a strong emphasis on explicit expectations and contingent rewards. The expectation theory suggests that employees are motivated by rewards that are directly related to their performance, which is consistent with this management style. These results are consistent with what Riaz and Haque (2016) found when they tested the hypothesis that material rewards increase motivation.

Laissez-faire leadership: The coefficient of correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee motivation is .798. This indicates that there is a strong as well as a positive correlation between the two mentioned constructs. The fact that this correlation has a p-value of .000 it shows that it has substantial weight in the statistical analysis. This implies that even though laissez-faire leadership comprises a hands-off approach, there is a positive correlation between this leadership style and employee motivation. This can be attributed to the idea that it allows motivated individuals to take initiative and responsibility (Wong and Giessner, 2018). In spite of the fact that a laissez-faire management style is typically linked to less employee control and involvement, this study's findings imply that, under some circumstances, this leadership style can be connected with higher levels of employee motivation. Empirical research, such as Breevaart and Zacher (2019) and Silva and Mendis (2017) found that providing employees with autonomy result in stronger intrinsic motivation. This finding is in line with the self-determination theory that was proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985).

Democratic leadership: The high positive correlation between democratic leadership and employee motivation is reflected by the fact that the correlation coefficient between the two is .839. This relationship is statistically significant, as indicated by the associated p-value of .000. This suggests that democratic leadership, which places an emphasis on the engagement and involvement of employees in the process of decision-making, is positively associated with higher levels of employee motivation. The correlation is consistent with the findings of Devi and Subiyantoro (2021), which emphasized that democratic leaders cultivate a sense of ownership, autonomy, and empowerment among employees, hence increasing the intrinsic motivation of those people. This connection is consistent with the idea put up by Allafchi (2017), which states that shared decision-making results in increased levels of both motivation and job satisfaction.

Autocratic Leadership: The correlation coefficient between autocratic leadership and employee motivation is .840, which likewise demonstrates a high positively correlated relationship. Given that

this association has a p-value of .000 it indicates that it is significant from a statistical view. This suggests that, contrary to commonly held beliefs, autocratic leadership where leaders make decisions with limited input can still be positively associated with employee motivation. This result indicates the possibility of a positive element, despite the fact that it is traditionally believed that the top-down decision-making style has a detrimental effect on motivation (Dyczkowska and Dyczkowski, 2018). Studies such as Rast et al. (2013) and Bhatti et al. (2012) stated that the clarity and decisiveness of authoritarian leadership inspire confidence and a feeling of direction in employees, thereby motivating them by giving a structured environment to work in. This seemingly contradictory finding can be explained with McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y, which shows that under certain conditions, even an authoritative presence can motivate staff.

MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 2 presents the results of the result of multiple linear regression analysis for this study.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression

	B	Beta	T-value	P-value
(Constant)	.557		1.331	.000***
Transformational	.159	.179	2.855	.005***
Transactional	-.308	-.350	-5.858	.000***
Laissez	.136	.127	2.202	.028**
Democratic	.413	.425	6.042	.000***
Autocratic	.464	.493	6.755	.000***
Regression- F ratio	216.168			
Regression Sig.	.000***			
R	.881			
R square	.775			
Adjusted R Square	.772			
Dependent Variable: Motivation				
** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%				

Model summary: The F ratio of the complete regression model is 216.168, and the corresponding p-value is .000. Both of these values show the model is statistically significance. The high R squared value of .775 demonstrates that about 77.5% of the variability in employee motivation is explained by the variation in the combined leadership styles that were taken into consideration in the model. A strong model fit is indicated by the value of .772 for the adjusted R-squared, which takes into account the total number of predictors.

Constant: The constant term, which is denoted by a beta coefficient with a value of .557, shows the value that is projected to be associated with employee motivation (dependent variable) when all leadership styles (independent variables) are assigned a value of zero. The t-value for the constant term is 1.331, and the p-value for it is .000. This indicates that the intercept has a statistically

significant impact on the data. Hence, a unit increase in the constant while keeping all the independent variables constant, the model will therefore increase by .557.

Transformational leadership style: Transformational leadership style recorded a B value of .159 from which it is deduced that while keeping the model constant, the overall regression equation will increase by .159. From the Beta coefficient of .179, it is deduced that that transformational leadership style contributes to the motivation of employees in the third position. In addition, it is also found from the regression analysis that transformational leadership style scored a t-value of 2.855 and a p-value of .005. Being significant at 1%, it is established that transformational leadership style significantly influences the motivational level of employees at CWA. This result is consistent with established understandings of transformational leadership. According to Ghasabeh et al. (2015), transformational leaders motivate and encourage their followers to realize their full potential. The ability of these leaders to instil a feeling of purpose and enthusiasm among workers, propelling them to go above and beyond in their regular work, is reflected in the positive effect on employee motivation in the context of CWA.

Transactional leadership style: Surprisingly, a B value of -.308 indicates that transactional leadership has a negative effect on employee motivation. Employee motivation drops by .308 units for every 1 unit rise in transactional leadership, assuming all other factors remain the same. In regards to the Beta coefficient of -.350, it is further established that transactional leadership style negatively contributes to the motivation of employees. The statistical significance of this result is highlighted by the fact that the t-value of -5.858 is significant and the p-value is .000. This result challenges common beliefs regarding the positive influence of transactional activities. This unexpected result could be because workers view transactional leadership as authoritarian, which in turn decreases their levels of level of motivation. Jensen et al. (2019) study supports this perspective by highlighting the potential negative effect of transactional activities on employee attitudes.

Laissez-faire leadership style: The B value of .136 demonstrates that a leadership style known as laissez-faire has a favorable influence on the motivation of workers. This indicates that for every unit rise in laissez-faire leadership, there is a corresponding gain of .136 units in employee motivation, provided that all other factors remain the same. It is also found from the regression analysis that the Beta coefficient is .127 which infers that in the four leadership styles that contribute to employee motivation, it is the fourth one. In this essence, it is found to be the least influential in respect to employee motivation. The statistical importance of this influence is supported by the fact that the t-value of 2.202 is significant and the p-value is .028. This finding is consistent with the findings of study conducted by Breevaart and Zacher (2019), which highlights the significance of autonomy in the process of cultivating intrinsic drive. It is possible that employees will be able to explore their jobs autonomously due to the empowerment that comes with having a laissez-faire leader, which will increase their sense of ownership and involvement.

Democratic leadership style: The significant B value of .413 demonstrates the strong positive connection between democratic leadership and employee motivation. When all other factors are held constant, there is a direct correlation between an increase in democratic leadership and a commensurate rise in motivation of 0.413 units for each unit of democratic leadership. From the Beta coefficient of .425 it is then inferred that democratic leadership is the second most influential motivation to the employees. The high t-value of 6.042 and the low p-value of .000 demonstrate that this relationship is very significant from a statistical point of view. This result is consistent with research conducted by Devi and Subiyantoro (2021) which highlighted the fact that participative decision-making has a beneficial impact on employee motivation. Having a say in the decisions that

affect one's life helps cultivate a sense of belonging as well as empowerment, both of which contribute to increased levels of motivation.

Autocratic leadership style: The surprise and favourable impact that authoritarian leadership has on the motivation of employees is highlighted by the B value of .464. This suggests that an increase of one unit in autocratic leadership correlates to an increase of 0.464 units in motivation, all other factors being held constant. It is then found that the Beta coefficient is .493 which is the largest one amongst the five leadership styles. It is thereby established that the autocratic leadership style is the most influential in regards to the motivation of the employees at CWA. The t value of 6.755 is quite significant, and the p-value of .000 ensures that this finding has a significant impact on statistical analysis. This finding runs counter to the common belief that authoritarian leadership styles are inherently demotivating for those under them. It is consistent with Dyczkowska and Dyczkowski (2018) perspective that employees prefer clear guidance and structure from autocratic leaders in certain circumstances. The findings provide light on the complex dynamic that exists between different types of leadership, as well as individual and contextual factors.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation within the public sector of Mauritius, focusing specifically on the Central Water Authority (CWA). Investigating five leadership styles—transactional, transformational, democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic—the study, utilizing a rigorous quantitative approach, reveals that all styles contribute to motivation, with autocratic leadership standing out as the most influential. The study assessed employee motivation in the public sector, emphasizing commitment to organizational goals, willingness to exceed regular duties, enthusiasm for challenges, perception of making a difference, and overall work enthusiasm. Notably, moderate motivation positively influenced proactive behavior, and highly motivated employees exhibited increased engagement. The relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation at CWA was explored, with transformational leadership positively correlating and transactional leadership showing a surprising negative correlation. Autocratic leadership emerged as the most influential, contradicting the common belief that it is demotivating. Multiple linear regression analyses demonstrated the combined effects of different leadership styles on employee motivation.

Given autocratic leadership's perceived influence on employee motivation, specific recommendations are proposed for implementation at CWA. To enhance the organizational framework, it is recommended to implement a systematic feedback and recognition system. This involves conducting regular performance evaluations and acknowledging achievements both publicly and privately. For the autocratic leadership style to be respected and effective, it is crucial to prioritize consistency and fairness. This includes ensuring the consistent enforcement of rules and procedures, along with fair distribution of rewards.

To foster professional development, consider investing in structured skill-building programs led by autocratic leaders. This involves conducting periodic skill assessments and providing opportunities for employees to grow in their professional capacities.

However, future research could include longitudinal studies to reveal the long-term effects of leadership styles on motivation and exploring intermediary processes moderating these associations. Comparative studies across organizational sectors and cultural settings could enhance understanding, unraveling cross-cultural variances in autocratic leadership effectiveness.

In conclusion, this research underscores the significance of motivation in influencing employees' dedication, enthusiasm, and ambition within the public sector, particularly at CWA. Contrary to popular belief, autocratic leadership was found to increase motivation by providing clear direction and structure. The study contributes valuable insights into the varied effects of leadership across organizational settings, paving the way for further exploration into its central role in shaping employee motivation.

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