

Associations Among Leadership Antecedents, Employee Empowerment, And Nigerian Public Entities

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Associations Among Leadership Antecedents, Employee Empowerment, And Nigerian**

**Public Entities**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore associations among leadership antecedents, employee empowerment, and Nigerian public entities. Reinforced by Transformational Leadership Theory, Ethical leadership, Motivation-Hygiene Theory, and Hersey and Ken Blanchard's (1993) Situational Theory of Leadership and motivation-hygiene theory, the study explored various themes to express different leadership perceptions of employee empowerment. Data was captured through participant responses from National Orientation Agency (NOA), Nigeria and triangulation achieved from the convergence of interview responses, document review, and note gathering from observations. The literature review demonstrated a leadership philosophy which provides a flow for future leadership development in Nigerian public entities.

The keywords and catchphrases that arose from participant interviews led to the emergence of the mind map. The mind map helped in circumscribes the pros and cons of associations among leadership antecedents, employee empowerment, and Nigerian public entities. Seven thematic representations emerged from the multi-iteration analysis process. The recommendation is to encourage employees should collaborate across project teams, establishing a two-way feedback system and adopt employee-HR self-service. The findings may contribute to leadership development in Nigerian public entities. Results may strengthen Nigeria's public sector as a critical factor in achieving leadership goals.

## **Introduction**

In the Nigerian public sector, administrators struggled with the pursuit of a “real” equitable, inclusive and diverse demonstration of truly representative bureaucracy that informed sustainable national socio-economic growth (George, Yusuff, & Cornelius, 2017; Ibietan, 2019).

Consequently, the welfare of Nigerian citizenry was “compromised with abject poverty, insecurity, unemployment, erratic power supply, poor medical and shelter, corruption, weak enforcement of transparency and accountability, exclusion from decision making and legitimacy crisis” (Ighodalo, 2017, p.60). Despite severe consequences of poor empowerment strategies on employees, organizations and the Nigerian nation, research revealed a lack of scholarly literature on the leadership antecedents in employee empowerment among public organizations in Nigeria. (Anthony & Renier, 2017; Amusan et al. 2017; Ighodalo, 2017; Yaya, 2019).

Much of Nigerian culture embraces Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of a hierarchical, paternalistic and high-power distance cultural context. Understanding cultural differences are critical determinants of organizational success (Zuva & Worku, 2018). The Nigerian citizenry finds it difficult to adopt mainstream quality and innovative strategies to change out-of-date practices. Additionally, the Nigerian leadership paradigm does not promote cultural significance to leaders and followers, which can fuel cultural models, avoid misapplication of governance and ensure alignment of direction. Therefore, sustainable Nigerian leadership requires openness to mitigate outdated practices (Dikko, Mutalib, & Ghazali, 2017).

The rapid and constant changes in technology and increased sophistication of consumers, require maximization of opportunities to manage technologies with increased competitiveness (White & Bruton, 2011). Public sectors focus on increasing efficiency of information technology

and transparency in decision-making processes of service delivery to citizens than profit making. E-governance provides key transformational strategies through potential enhancement of citizen's participation particularly at the grassroots level also promoting good governance (Ojo, 2014; Arduini, Belotti, Denni, Giungato, & Zanfei, 2010). Unfortunately, Nigeria lags behind in e-governance readiness within Africa and globally (Amagoh, 2015). Evaluation of National Orientation Agency (NOA) ([www.noa.gov.ng](http://www.noa.gov.ng)) indicates disparities between policy and implementation.

There are several styles of leadership that lead to employee empowerment. Emuwa and Fields (2017) argued in favor of authentic leadership for the benefits of leadership to accrue to members of the organization. Empowerment approaches influence positive effects on employees in demonstrating organization-centered sense of direction. The use of applicable leadership styles makes employee empowerment activities meaningful to employees. Setyaningrum (2017) stated that a servant leader would be able to engender the enabling environment for employee empowerment by showing authenticity. While Fransen, Delvaux, Mesquita, and Puyenbroeck (2018) advocated for shared leadership, Dartey-Baah and Mekpor (2017) insisted on the need for an emotional intelligence component at all personnel levels. A leader's style is, therefore, critical to the success of the organization or its units.

Today's managers resort to empowerment practices to elevate the status and welfare of the employee (Angelovska, Anturan & Blazeska, 2018; Merwe, 2017). The performance of leaders should match citizenry values and expectations. Incidentally, leaders demonstrate specific skills and styles to deliver quality service to followers, whether in government service or industry and commerce. Soane, Butler, and Stanton (2015) argued that expectations go both ways between leaders and followers. The effect of each party's disposition depends on various

factors, such as personality, performance, and other elements requisite in both parties. While Nichols (2016) focused on the desire of followers, Soane, et al. (2015) suggested essential ingredients for players on both sides. Anwuluorah (2016) explored the triangle of peace, security, and religious crises. As diverse as these studies are, the underlying paradigms of personality and performance remain constant. Ikeanyibe (2016b) regarded uniformity in government systems as crucial to leadership success. Durokifa and Abdul-Wasi (2016) were interested in upholding core issues such as developmental determinants, deliverables, and shortfalls. Albert (2016), Moghalu (2017), and Olaniyan (2016) emphasized leadership development to understanding continent-wide perspectives as keys to wiping out corrupt practices.

## **Background**

Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups, four hundred languages and dialects with three main religious groups, Christianity and Islam and African Traditional Religion (NOA, 2018). Multi-ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities provide fertile ground for potential conflict. In recent times deepened cracks along ethnic, religious, regional and class lines increased inter and interreligious crises (Anwuluorah, 2016; Nwankpa, 2016). Social degeneration and high levels of corruption remain high as Nigeria is consistently rated by Transparency International (TI) as among the most corrupt countries in the World in its Corruption Perception Index (TICP, 2018).

In Nigeria, inequality among peers is common. Asymmetrical control of less powerful people and resources occur regularly, as leaders subjectively treat subordinates in ways that pose a challenge to managing affairs. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in modern societies where the ruling class and the most powerful utilize more sophisticated methods of exploitation. Bechara and Van de Ven (2011) explained a critical standpoint on empowerment like any management philosophy having moral undertone with sets of ideas essential to fulfilling individual, organizational and community needs bringing about valid and reliable solutions.

Nigerian public entities experience ineffective service delivery following poor implementation strategies within the public sector (Ighodalo, 2017). Indeed, leadership in Nigeria is problematic (Manu, 2019; Nwani, 2016). Magnitudes of difficulties resonate from demotivation of people, rampant cases of indiscipline, operational ineffectiveness and inefficiency orchestrating some of the episodes of public policies summersault, mutual mistrust, and suspicion. As a result, socio-ethnic tensions and conflicts, economic and educational

disparities, ethnocentrism tribalism, nepotism, social injustice and perceived inequity abound (George et al.2017).

Empowerment is central to good leadership but the meaning of empowerment changes according to their context. Employee empowerment resonates from managerial practices fostering employees' autonomy and responsibilities, and particularly useful work orientation aiming to foster a certain psychological mindset for empowered behaviors (Bulley, Osei-Bonsu, & Rasaan, 2017). Empowerment consists of the organizational structure, managerial behavior, peer input, and individual psychological state (Florczak, 2017; Hadi, & José Closs, 2016). The multidimensional processes of transferring the right to control actions and decisions to employees increase self-sufficiency and autonomy standards, raising employee passion, participation and value (Cierniak-Emerych & Piwowar-Sulej, 2017). When power and information are redistributed equitably, responsibility, efficiency, and employee commitment are enhanced (Akhtar & Malik, 2015).

Empowerment involves a demonstration of employee confidence, inspiration and motivation to make meaningful contributions in organizational functionality. Many empowerment programs fail because employees resist empowerment. Therefore, empowerment must entail cautious implementation to impact other leadership behaviors by creating new leadership based on trust (Rydenfält , Johansson, Odenrick, Åkerman, & Larsson, 2015). Implementation strategies in employee empowerment differ from organization to organization. Individuals express an understanding of phenomena not only verbally, but also through practical demonstration of knowledge. Leaders are, therefore, in a position to understand the concept of employee empowerment. Once such an understanding exists, the ways and means of actualizing the phenomenon would become possible (Amusan, et al. 2017; Emuwa & Fields, 2017). Thus,

employee empowerment strategies rest on a leader's exposure to leadership skills, leadership styles, and public administration experiences.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

Unlike traditional leadership practices primarily focused on leader effects on followers and logical progressions and thought processes, future Nigerian leaders align with leadership theories that foster group-orientedness, higher-level goals, integrative processes for collective innovation outputs underpinning the importance of emotions, ethics, and moral behavior (Bass, 1985). In stark contrast to trait theories, Contemporary leadership theories focus on the behaviors and cognitive abilities of leaders. Leadership is action-focused rather than personality, intelligence, motivation, or other characteristics. Relevant theories include transformational, ethical, participative leadership style and situational model of leadership and however, resounding empirical evidence globally and locally favor transformational leadership style over most leadership style (Ejere & Abasilim, 2013; Francis, 2017).

### **Transformational Leadership**

With a high level of hierarchy and formalization in today's hyper-turbulent Nigerian public sector, transformational leadership encourages cross-functional teams for improvement of coordination of interdependent activities among functional subunits must be contained (Yukl, 2013). Theoretically, inter-team collaborative philosophy records great successes from flexibility, efficiency in human resource management, effective communication and, learning and creativity from a diverse background (Yukl, 2013; Potnuru, Sahoo & Sharma, 2019). TL fosters group-orientedness, higher-level goals, integrative processes for collective innovation outputs underpinning the importance of emotions, ethics, and moral behavior (Bass, 1998). TL strategically empowers processes so that "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels

of morality and motivation” (Yukl, 2013, p. 20). Following trust, appreciation, allegiance, and respect regarding transformational, leaders, motivate followers above expectation. With an optimistic and attractive vision, TL stimulates followers' creativity through constant training and learning (Rothfelder, Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2012). “Transformational leaders define the need for change, develop a vision for the future, and mobilize follower commitment to achieve results beyond what would normally be expected” (Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005, p. 3).

### **Ethical Leadership**

Ethical leadership is the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making” (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Ethical leaders model moral characteristic such as honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness in their behavior. They demonstrate interpersonal processes of communication as well as provide appropriate reward or punishment (Brown et al., 2005).

Employees follow moral codes and statements, but strong ethical leaders’ model ethical conduct for employees and reinforce shared ethical values to promote an ethical culture. Ethical business conducts derived from core values are standard and systematic for evaluation and monitoring. Ethical leadership behavior enhances employee job characteristics (autonomy and task significance), task performance and OCBs (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers, 2016). Unethical leaders cause fear and anxiety in followers, but trust emanates from ethical leader behavior, proactiveness, open dialogue and constantly questioning morality in self- monitoring (VanderPal & Victor Shan C Ko., 2014). The challenge is successfully fighting persistent ethical dilemmas including corruption, human rights, transparency personal wealth accumulation, lack of integrity, and poor transparency require ethical governance (Wright, Hassanm & Park, 2016).

Demonstrating normatively appropriate conduct promotes follower loyalty (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Change driven by top management and supervisory ethical leadership grounded in social exchange theory enhances reciprocal obligations (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes & Salvador, 2009).

**Empirical Findings on Ethical Leadership:** Ethical leadership is critical in defining effective leadership. Ethical leadership is the exhibition of distinguishable behavior while interacting with others; ethical people encourage others to give and take positive norms in words and deed (Emuwa & Fields, 2017; Gandolfi & Stone, 2017; Mercurio, 2015; Nash, 2016). Ethical leadership requires relational processes. Cunha, Pina, Guimarães-costa, Rego, and Clegg (2010) argued on leading and following (un)ethically and re-iterated on liminality-based analysis of the process of ethical leadership/followership in organizations. The study complements prior studies that characterized some ethical lapses as ineffective decision-making, rather than deliberate unethical practice. Abou Hashish (2017) adopted a descriptive correlational research design to examine inpatient care units at three different hospitals affiliated to different health sectors at Alexandria governorate. The Ethical Climate Questionnaire, Survey of Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Index of Job Satisfaction, and Intention to Turnover scale were useful in measuring study variables. The result disclosed significant positive correlations between the perception of ethical work climate among nurses including perceived organizational support, commitment, and job satisfaction.

Another dimension of ethical behavior is the follower's reactions to unethical requests by leaders and the ability to stand against unethical leader requests. Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2013) sought to "reverse the lens" in leadership and ethics research by investigating whether follower (rather than the leader) characteristics are associated with intentions to engage in unethical

behavior" (p. 49). Data collected from 161 voluntary online participants, primarily male (48% female, 52% male) with an average age of 39 years (SD = 8.3) and 11-year average tenure (SD = 12), examined the relationship between coproduction of leadership and the romance of leadership to "crime of obedience." Results showed a higher correlation of crime of obedience and tendency in complying with the leader's unethical directive with followers with weaker coproduction beliefs than followers with stronger coproduction beliefs. The study contained a revelation the importance of followers in the maintenance of ethical conducts in organizations.

### **Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1993) Situational Theory of Leadership**

The situational theory of leadership demonstrated enduring appeal since inception by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1993). Hersey and Blanchard proposed the taxonomy of four leadership styles constituting a framework for matching each style to specific situations (Luizzi, 2017). Empowering leadership may be situational, opposing the more traditional, bureaucratic approach to leadership. The situational leadership theory suggest that a leader's best strategy was dependent on the situation's variables (Bass & Bass, 2008). Situational leadership require different combinations of supportive and directive leadership behaviors or an ideal type of leadership style to apply to each development level (Thompson & Glasø, 2015). Since every person has different behavior in different situations, a good leader recognizes the skills and qualities of each employee to address everyone's evolution appropriately (Ro, Su, & Chen, 2016). The assumption is that leaders provide followers with various support and direction for organizational performance.

### **Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Herzberg's two-factor theory provided a theoretical framework extensively described to scientifically assess the satisfactory job behavior of an individual at the workplace (Zhao,

Thurman, & He, 1999). Herzberg's two-factor theory contend that an organization can have both negative and positive motivational influences. To explain factors that influence job satisfaction, Herzberg (1974) drew attention to work environment capable of motivating employees and creating dissatisfaction among employees as "motivation factors" and "hygiene factors," respectively. Hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) such as salary, supervision, interpersonal relations, policy, and administration, and working conditions may satisfy basic biological needs but will never generate positive feelings toward work. In contrast, when the workplace contains motivating factors (satisfiers) such as achievement, recognition for achievement, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement, employees experience job satisfaction and psychological growth (Brody, Demarco, & Lovrich, 2002; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Zhao et al., 1999). Organization can have both negative and positive motivational influences on employee empowerment. Effective leaders should strive to drive both basic biological needs need and psychological growth (Herzberg, 1974). Such concerns mirrored participants' notion that onus was placed on the organizational leaders to demonstrate knowledge and ability to empower the employees, particularly in a developing country with contending challenges. Identifying challenges and crushing them meant much to the employees. Herzberg's two-factor theory complemented the full range leadership theory by uncovering the divergence between the leadership style of upper managers and middle managers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

A weak relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment may not certainly lead to organizational commitment. The more empowered employees are, the more satisfied and committed they are likely to be (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2003) to organizational leadership and making positive impact (Slate, Wells, & Johnson, 2003)

## **Literature Review**

### **Organizational Commitment**

The concept of organizational commitment (OC) has been around since the 1960's highlighting one of the most critical issues in the organization particularly the impact on employee dedication and loyalty (Enginyurt, Cankaya, Soner, Aksay, Koc, Bas, Orhan, & Ozer, 2016). Sociologist researchers often described OC as a predictor variable to explain a variety of phenomena in power, religion, recruitment, bureaucratic, and political behavior (Becker, 1960). For their study, the attitudinal organizational commitment as propounded by Howard Becker (Becker, 1960) explained the nature and dynamics of commitment to organizational purpose. Interestingly, OC may not be limited to "employees" passive loyalty towards the organization (Enginyurt et al., 2016) but emotional, active connection and psychological attachment between employees and their organizations can motivate employees to sacrifice efforts without anticipating rewards. OC is multidimensional reflecting the strength of the link between the employee and organizations (Enginyurt et al., 2016).

OC is about levels of intensity of an individual's identification and involvement within an organization. Thus, Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1979) asserted that OC involves employee faith in an organization, acceptance of goals and values, willingness to give considerable effort to the organization and a strong desire to remain a member of the organization. The underlining understanding is that social exchange philosophy suggested OC as a primary exchange variable, as it involves employees' engendered socio-emotional attachment to the organization and collectively to its members (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organizational problems within the realm of individuals involve personality traits playing an essential role in OC. Based on differing definitions of OC by scholars; management literature must underscore dimensions of

culture in developing a higher level of employee commitment through their context of study such as dominant personality traits that provoke specific cultural practices (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004).

Scholars identified OC as one of the best predictors of outcomes of employee turnover, absenteeism, performance, motivation, and job withdrawal behaviors (Khoeini & Attar, 2015; Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursière, & Raymond, 2016). The rapid changes in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries further intensified the exploration of job satisfaction in areas of technological and organizational changes and contributions to theory and practice in fields of sociology, industrial psychology, and predictor variable to describe organizational behavior (Holland, Pyman, Cooper, & Teicher, 2011). OC identified and connected employees' perceived assurances on tasks to organization's values and goals (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers, 2016).

**Practical implications.** Several studies attested to affective organizational commitment. Enginyurt et al. (2016) examined the relationships between sub-dimensions of burnout syndrome (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) and sub-dimensions of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment). The empirical findings suggested affective commitment as a key factor of burnout syndrome in healthcare authorities.

A longitudinal study by Renaud et al. (2017) involved examining the association between satisfaction with traditional benefits and perquisites and turnover via the mediating effect of organizational commitment. Results from data collected from the Canadian division of a vast international Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) denote that satisfaction with traditional benefits brings a higher impact with direct and indirect effects on turnover, as against satisfaction with perquisites with only indirect impact on turnover concerning organizational

commitment.

In a qualitative study, Senaji, Metwally, Sejjaaka, Puplampu, Michaud, and Adedoyin-Rasaq (2014) explored African perspective of leadership behavior and motivation in Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda using the Delphi technique. Senaji et al. (2014) posited that for Africa, the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment, and malfunctioning and underperforming institutions and organizations are real. Despite the massive natural resource base of the continent, this procedure is not an effective option. While decriing insufficient contextualization of the African perspective of leadership effectiveness, and motivation leadership. Senaji et al. (2014) recommend that today's management and organizational studies opt for methods that maximize the voice of the participants and significantly impact socio-economic development.

The significant effects of leadership, leadership style, and employee motivation for organizational performance often hinge on demographic variables (Dampson, Havor & Laryea, 2018). Male and female managers thus differed in aspirations on leadership styles having a different individual impact on the performance also indicating differentiation of constructs of OC. Transactional leadership styles seemed more appropriate for small-scale enterprises in Nigeria, which presupposes that OC in private organizations in Nigeria may differ from OC in a public organization (Adetayo, Agelebe, & Bankole, 2017). Thus, a transition to a transformational leadership approach became essential as the organizations entered maturity.

Dikko et al. (2017) explained the need to fill the gap in the literature to create more understanding of managing differences in the African workplace since prior studies focused more on Anglo-American regions. In sub-Saharan African studies, the role played by power distance on the relationship between personality and affective commitment is significant (Dikko

et al., 2017). Culture, particularly national culture, influences organizations' management of diversity (Peretz, Levi, & Fried, 2015). The authors argued that high power distance societies pose a more significant challenge than feminine culture requiring a conceptual model that acknowledges the contributions of cultural tightness (Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006).

### **Employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment in public organizations.**

The synergic impact of satisfied employees rationalized the need for creating change and tackling the most complex issues in government organizations. Ahmad, Mustafa, Ahmad and Ahmad (2012) measured employees' satisfaction level (ESL) on 4 points scale with the mean value of 1 represents highly satisfied, 2 moderately satisfied, 3 represents least satisfied and 4 accounts for dissatisfied from the job in Government organization in Punjab, Pakistan. The results revealed 43.1 percent of employees as satisfied while 57 percent dissatisfied employee's supervisory style accounted for 21 percent of employees to be dissatisfied. The focus of the study on the comparison of government and project type organizations explained the study's capacity to fill the gap in the literature absent in prior research on factors relating to employee satisfaction. Empirical analysis suggested influential determinants of employee satisfaction as the nature of the job, salary structure, working environment and ambiance in Punjab and capacity building and training (Armstrong & Baron, 2005; Becker, 1985; Chiang, Back, & Canter, 2005; George, 2000).

In a study on management theory and practice in Romanian public organizations, Ciobanica (2016) explored concepts and interpretations of performance management, particularly the role of the human factor, the customer, the employee, and managerial needs. Ciobanica (2016) argued that the failure of some Romanian public organizations in designing an effective performance management system is due to the inappropriate mentality of treating

management problems thus, impacting employee commitment. The study considered demographic variables in examining primary weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities for diagnostic review of social work services and discovered that external factors such as poorly developed methodologies, inadequate techniques, and tools of intervention threatened employees and performance management. The findings from this study gave an insight into further studies in a Nigerian context.

Ogunkuade (2016) undertook a review of the literature on workplace behavior in Nigerian formal organizations and discovered the need for a harmonious and conducive work environment to achieve workers' effectiveness, efficiency, and high productivity. Appropriate workplace behavior will empower organizations to achieve maximum utilization of human resources and realize the organization's goals. The workplace psychology impacts workplace behavior for development of guidelines for productive behavior reinforcement and management (Ogunkuade, 2016). Such a direction incorporated a positive work attitude and an appropriate organizational structure that impacted employee commitment. Employee virtues and rewards help correct negative worker attitude and create a conducive work environment for the realization of full employee potentials and enhancement of positive social interaction, healthy well-being and productivity.

After the synthesis of several different relevant kinds of literature, Ogunkuade (2016) concluded that the productivity of an employee is dependent on behavioral patterns concerning attitude work, which is consequent of organizational setup. The study of behavior in the workplace explained the significance of formal and informal work environments both that affect employee satisfaction. Ogunkuade (2016) argued that the “push for good behavior” within the

workplace contributed positively to creating a productive and harmonious environment; workers thus receive inspiration and achieve their full potentials.

### **Leadership Activities in Developing Future Leaders**

Future leaders require a dynamic global mindset and progressive organizational synergy for adaptively and revitalized vision. That mindset is ideal for competitive advantage and survival by reviewing systematic environmental scanning and identifying threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses to mitigate Nigerian factors to promote citizenry welfare and examine external conditions that are consequential for their firms (Borges & Janissek-Muniz, 2018; Fang & Chen, 2016; Pryor, Holmes, Webb, & Liguori, 2019).

The use of standard operating procedures characteristically led to doing things right for long-term success (Yusuf et al., 2016). Leadership antecedents are diverse within the leadership thought. However, the employee empowerment aspect of leadership constitutes a challenge that some leaders might not know. Some leaders lead by occupying a somewhat high position among other people. Other leaders lead by demonstrating skills and styles. The presence of high-ranking officers among parastatal leaders is insufficient to conclude that leadership exists in such organizations. Organizational leaders who do not have specific reasons to do things in particular ways create gaps that become opportunities for individuals with little or no talent to enter leadership echelons (Adegbami & Uche, 2016).

Nigerian public organizations undertake activities, but the leaders have the responsibility to initiate the actions; besides, such activities should be Nigerian to deliver appropriate results. Leadership behavior is fundamental for optimal utilization of resources, inspiring higher productivity and empowering employee performance (Adegbami & Uche, 2016; Ogunkuade, 2016). Leadership styles and leadership behavior need to create stable modes of behaviors to

increase influence, constituting the appropriate essence of leadership (Albert, 2016; Mauri, 2017). The perception of leadership trust and interpretation of value placed job functions by employees should be of utmost importance to employers (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Obadare, 2017). Yeh and Hsieh (2017) established that 45% to 65% of management styles played a pivotal role in influencing job satisfaction and performance of employees to satisfy the organizational needs. The key concepts form necessary guidance to the most significant concepts and practices of leadership to influence individuals and organizations.

**Integrity.** Integrity is an important diver of ethical leadership underscoring adherence to moral principles and the essence of ethical values (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017). *Integrity is indeed critical for instituting a positive organizational culture. Without honesty, strength of character and courage, there will be no trust. Integrity leads to trust, and trust leads to respect, loyalty, and ultimately decisive action. Corporate integrity originates from top management, efficiently displayed and communicated throughout the organization (Pulay, 2017).* Integrity is an essential part of leadership which means always doing the right thing and, in all circumstances, instead of placing higher value on impressing others (Kolzow, 2014).

Africa's developmental challenges argue the implications of corrupt leadership and public accountability (Gberevbie, Joshua, Excellence-Oluye, & Oyeyemi, 2017; Ogunkuade, 2016). The absence of committed personnel and institutional discipline explains the levels of corruption, unexplainable affluence, and unrestrained greed on the part of the elites and political class (Omale & Amana, 2014). It was therefore not surprising due to the magnitude and dimension of corruption in Nigeria was scandalously high (Ojeka et al., 2019). Integrity is a needed foundational value of developing internal ethical culture and uncompromising adherence to the organization's defined values (Ferrell et al., 2017). In recognition of the devastating

effects of the erosion of national values, Nigerians can change the negative perception of embracing whole some ethics and practices worthy for assimilation by its citizens.

**Trust.** Trust relates to the impact of integrity in that followers have confidence in leaders perceived as high on integrity. Leadership trust is defined as “the employee’s willingness to accept vulnerability on the basis of positive expectations of the intentions of the leader” (Engelbrecht et al. 2017, p. 369). Trust presupposes an increase in work engagement is present when an employee is fully committed to the work through focused energy and a positive state of mind.

Identified factors of employee dissatisfaction explain the lack of trust, commitment, and support given to change initiatives and leadership in general and established a lack of reciprocal process between leadership and followership (Burke, 2013). Leaders model exemplary, visionary, selfless and competent and trustworthy behavior to gain needed followership expected for the high-quality relationship. Leadership trust motivates followers’ commitment and satisfaction to leaders and organizations and less inclined to engage in unethical behavior (Asencio, 2016). Ethical leadership is tied to perceptions of the degree to which leaders behave ethically by differentiating through their honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness. Balanced decision-makers consider the ethical consequences, provide employees with consistent expectations, and follow through with organization-constrained, normatively appropriate behavior. Unlike ineffective leadership that failed to meet high standards of fairness and transparency, behaviors and characteristics exemplified in ethical leadership are likely to engender feelings of indebtedness to which employees respond through the demonstration of organizational citizenship behavior (Sharif & Scandura, 2014). Public sector leaders promote good governance by maintaining trust between the government and the citizenry and guiding

employees with sincerity of purpose, respect for diversity, social justice, self-reliance and recognition of welfare and rights of employees.

**Professionalism.** Scholars have decried corruption, ineffective political leadership, and conflict pedaling poor economic growth and social development significant challenges of the Nigerian public sector (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, 2016; Asencio, 2016; Oyekanmi & Majekodunmi, 2016). Future leaders must refrain from unethical conduct and non-partisan officers of the state maintain candor through objectivity and impartiality. Commitment to quality and excellence, displaying the highest level of professionalism in undertaking tasks are paramount. The flow of ideas, knowledge, and enterprise in the public sector require developing skills through self-development and harness training opportunities. The leader in Nigeria public sector should show understanding of constitutionally mandated diversities of religion, language, ethnicity, and culture through national integration policies of the federal character commission to prevent the disconnect between espoused and practiced values. The leader should ensure observance of the fundamental objectives and directive principles; promote the right to freedom of thought; conscience; and religion as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution.

**Cultural awareness.** Culture differentiates one group from the other and one nation from others thereby influencing behavior (Zuva & Worku, 2018). A broad-based cultural awareness with a global perspective is required for competitive advantage in an increasingly global environment (Pryor et al. 2019). The culture of a country influences corporate governance requiring continuous research, to determine the focus of government efforts in understanding cultural levels for organizational effectiveness and appropriate alignment to critical decisions (Mintz, 2005). The future leaders must leverage on differences, convergence, and networks to

motivate followers by adjusting leadership styles to satisfy national and organizational requirements.

**Leadership behavior.** Leadership is all about behaviors. Words are empty if the leader does not demonstrate and follow through on the words. Changing the global mindset and progressive organizational synergy require adaptivity and revitalized vision for competitive advantage and survival. In the context of a complex environment, the need calls for new behaviors in leadership. Leadership behavior is not limited to empathy, courage, persistence, vitality, charisma, self-confidence, competence, enthusiasm, stability, corporate social responsibility, self-awareness, diversity, ethics, negotiation, and mediation.

**Shared leadership.** The primary purpose of the leadership process was to accomplish shared goals between leaders and followers (Rost, 1993; Stogdill, 1950). Shared leadership is redefined as a “simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterized by the serial emergence of official as well as unofficial leaders.” (Pearce, Yoo, & Alavi, 2004, p. 48). Shared leadership is a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in teams in which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of team goals. Shared leadership distributes peer-based, or lateral, influence although at certain times it involves upward or downward hierarchically based influence. The fundamental distinction between shared leadership and traditional, top-down models of leadership is that influence does not merely move downward from leaders to subordinates or followers but broadly distributed among members (Smith 2020; Hans & Gupta, 2018). Shared leadership positively affects coordination activities, goal commitment, knowledge sharing and team performance (Han, Lee, Beyerlein, & Kolb, 2018).

**Ethical stewardship.** Ethical stewardship honors duties owed to employees, stakeholders, and society in pursuit of long-term wealth creation to enhance commitment and followership (Stanwick & Stanwick, 2016). Civil servants must fulfill stewardship roles through injudicious use of time and efficient management of material, financial and human resources for the common good. Transformational leaders focus on group goals rather than personal goals enhancing commitment to ethical stewardship for sustainability and increasing levels of employee commitment. Leaders establish an ethical culture through ethical commitment and demonstrating the duality of moral person and manager (Stanwick & Stanwick, 2016).

**Social corporate responsibility (SCR).** Social corporate responsibility (SCR) demonstrates “the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life” (Carol-Ann, 2009, p. 10). Top management values, ethics, and morals drive the tone of organizational culture as the foundation for corporate social responsibility (Guillet, Yaman, & Kucukusta, 2012; Hurst, 2004). Future leadership in addition to consistency, competitiveness, and profit should facilitate responsible growth that creates social and economic development because leaders and organizations serve community sustenance.

**Competence.** Competence is a provision of collaborative performance, recognition of diversity and collective demonstration of cultural competence, education, and experience to undertake innovation. The first step to becoming a successful leader is proficiency in technical, project management, interpersonal and political skills and demonstrating a commitment to the organization (Yukl, 2013). *Leadership ability, skills, experience, and knowledge are paramount while showing computer literacy, risk and change management skills to mitigate constant corporate failures, failed merger and acquisition deals that threaten organizational success*

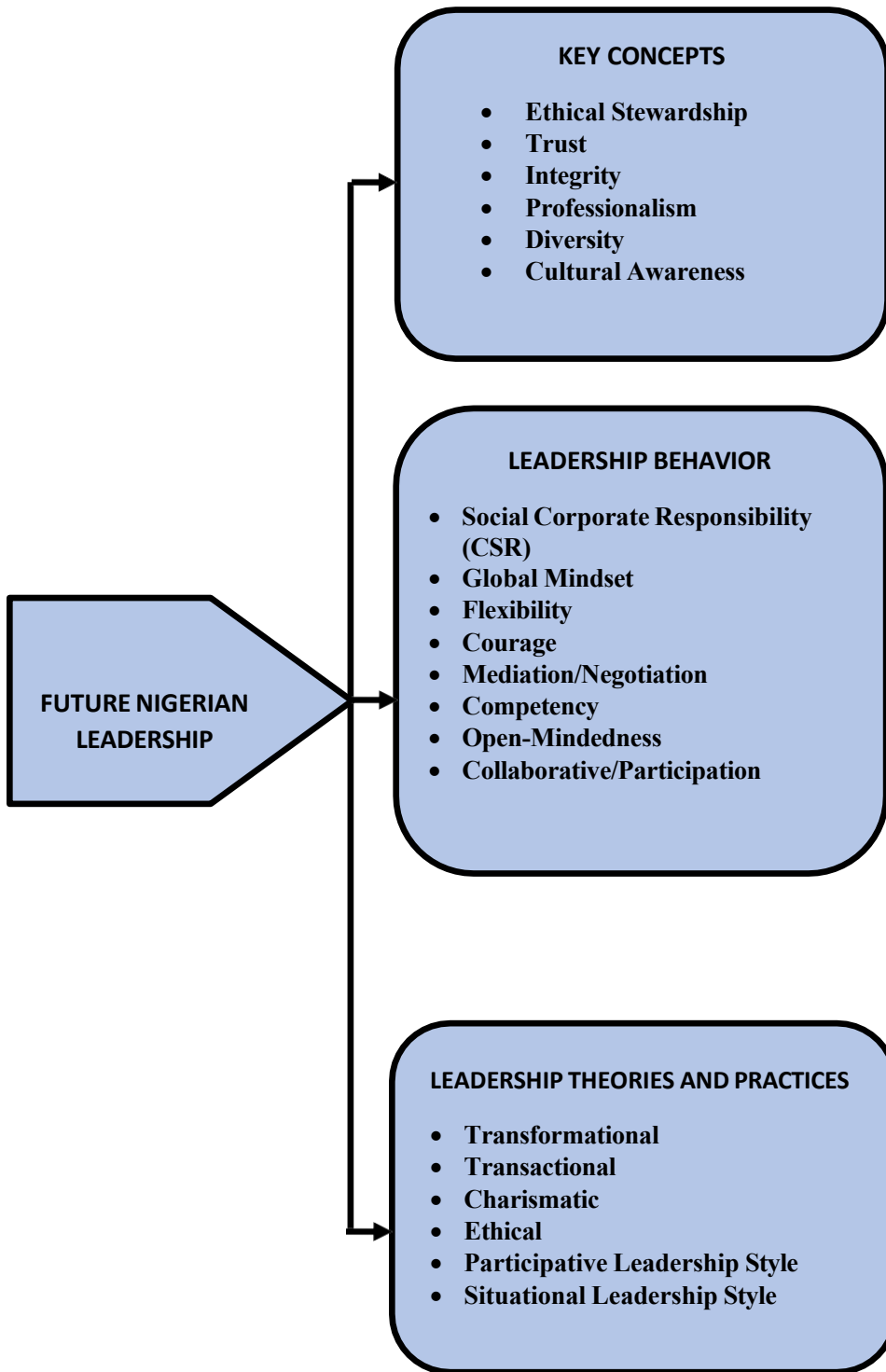
(Jacobs, Witteloostuijn, & Christe-Zeyse, 2013). When leaders are interested in the future of an organization, such leaders take steps to train young talents with succession in mind (Nwankpa, 2016). Top executives influence collective learning, best practices, knowledge management, digitally enabled structures, flexibility, and innovation as critical values in corporate culture (Yukl, 2013). A leader's in-depth insight into decision-making are mediating factors affecting collective learning, human capital and competitive advantage (Yukl, 2013). Failure in leadership competency leads to a lack of confidence and loss of employee support. Achieving sustainable competitive advantage in today's organizations require proactive and effective management of change, systematic and purposive data management for probable research outcome (Brown, 2011).

**Communication and interpersonal skills.** Future change leaders require sophisticated levels of interpersonal and communication skills. Change agents must be emotionally resilient, tolerating to ethical conflicts and ambiguities, and be politically savvy. Improvement in e-governance platforms demanding and increased citizenry focus with timely and efficient service delivery demand is paramount.

**Self -Awareness.** Self-awareness is considered critical for leader development (Nahavandi, 2014; Burke, 2013). Leadership is not about command but requiring characteristics of transforming leaders with self-awareness and high emotional intelligence to garner significant followership. Leadership self-awareness resonates through coaching, mentoring, understanding personality, gaining theoretical knowledge, researching, productive feedback and observing other leaders helps develop effective leaders through practical experience to enhance organizational efficiency (Nahavandi, 2014).

**Emotional intelligence (EI).** Emotional Intelligence (EI) is “an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve based on them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them” (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999, p. 267). Emotional intelligence is critical to effective leadership and developing successful leaders. EI is highly essential in resolving ethical dilemmas, conflict resolution and efficiently managing diversities (Yukl, 2013). Nigerian Leaders with the highest degree of EI possess effective communication techniques and better prepared to tackle current and future issues, particularly in a pluralist nation. Having moral courage for resolving moral convictions is critical. Doing the right thing in the face of contending forces requires the courage to battle the internal and external forces. Leaders need to be courageous in order to become great.

**Negotiation and mediation.** Mediation and negotiation are relationship-oriented, targeting the prevention of lawsuits and solving conflicts within a reasonable time frame empowering member (Cheng, 2015). Given the crucial role of social justice and the rule of law in human interaction and achieving and just society, future Nigerian leaders may develop negotiation and mediation skills for peaceful conflict resolution through discussions, concession, compromise, communication, persuasion, and bargaining (NOA, 2018b). Authentic leaders develop mediation skills to resolve disputes through consensus building to arrive at mutually agreeable solutions and institute peaceful and inclusive organizations (NOA, 2018b). Mediation and negotiation opportunities facilitate conflict resolutions, maintain privacy, develop mutual trust between parties and guide in maintaining common interests.



**Figure 1:** Consists of three significant pathways for future Nigerian leadership which include Ke concepts, leadership behavior, and leadership theories and practice.

**E-governance:** Creating appropriate project implementation platforms that are responsive to organizational culture, social, economic, and political changes is significant to the efficient and effective delivery of information technology in the public sector (Amagoh, 2015; Asogwa, 2013; Bello, Muhammad, Faizuniah, & Mohamed, 2015; Ojo, 2014). Application of e-governance is potent because “The emergence of information communication technology has provided opportunity for borderlessness, interconnectedness and de-territorialization of government policies and programmes within the global village” and “becomes surmountable through the modern approach of communication. Application of e-governance has been a potent instrument in disseminating information, consultation, enhancing citizen’s participation, sending feedback to the citizens, monitoring and evaluating government projects” (Sunday, 2014, p. 77). With rapid and constant changes in technology and increased sophistication of consumers, leaders should exploit opportunities to manage technologies with increased competitiveness (White & Bruton, 2011). Public sectors are more concerned with increasing the efficiency and transparency in the decision-making processes of service delivery to citizens than profit-making. E-governance provides key transformational strategies in the public sector through potential enhancement of citizen’s participation, particularly at the grassroots level, also promoting good governance (Ojo, 2014).

The e-governance in Nigerian public entities a lack of adequate infrastructural and technological tools, unfavorable organization structure, and weak organizational culture (Ishino, 2014). The dilemmas of e-government in developing countries are problematic in defining models of value creation (Castelnuovo & Simonetta, 2007). Lead governments sorted a formal performance approach to measure and improve technologies (Walsham, 1999) and became more decentralized to meet customer's satisfaction trends (Ellingson & Wambsgans, 2001). When

performance measured customer perspectives, integrated with internal, learning, and financial perspectives, a broader picture of NOA will be exposed, with a robust organizing framework (Alhyari et al., 2013).

Following the dearth of modern technology in Nigerian public entities, one strategic focus should be a complex interplay between people and technology, where neither the social (people, relationships, structure) nor technology (devices, process, materials) stand separately (Golden, 2013). To trigger a high engagement and strong workforce commitment, the National e-government Strategy (NeGSt) advocated a combination of socio-technical for higher productivity, enhancing stakeholder value, national competitiveness, and good governance at all levels of the Nigerian public sector (Mundy & Musa, 2010). For competitive advantage, incorporating modern technologies, e-governance, enterprise-wide self-service platforms will synergize weak communication to empower employees.

### **Methodology and Design**

The research design for this study was a single case study because of the capacity to explore the nuances of the leadership antecedents in employee empowerment through an organization. A case study contains a comprehensive description and inquiry of one or more cases (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011). A case study is defined as "... a transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected (event, concept, program, and process ...)" (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007, p. 81). The 'instrumental' intent deepens understanding of study phenomena (Stake, 1995). The focus on NOA emphasized the researcher's disciplinary and professional orientation which increase the capacity of extricating existing empowerment strategies (Stake, 2005).

Since there exists a lack of clarity of the boundaries between the phenomena and contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994), an adoption of case study design is most appropriate for delimiting the study object to narrow down the broad field (Stake, 2005); within specific parameters of place and time to an easily researchable topic (Creswell, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Yin, 2018). Thus, the researcher “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection...” (Creswell, 2012, p. 97).

The geographic setting for the current research study was Nigeria. The target population, the employees of a public organization within the federal government of Nigeria provided a deeper understanding of the phenomena of study. The population for this study was selected from NOA employees from the offices 6 geo-political zones in the 36 states of the nation. A study of a sub-segment of the population helped explore a narrow angle that is appropriate for a qualitative study. The sampling frame used for this study was upper and lower employees with at least 15 years of working experience. The iterative feedback probed that resulted in the revision of questions led to improved communication between interviewer and interviewee. That process also ensured open-ended questions that resulted to robust answers.

1. What NOA empowerment strategies are in place in your organization? In what ways has these empowerment strategies been helpful in achieving organizational goals?
2. Describe how you feel about the quality of work you currently do?
3. What kinds of things have you changed in your life following NOA empowerment?

Data gathering occurred within three months with timing and location subject to participant convenience. The researcher used an audio recorder to record interviews with the consent of participants. The interview was voluntary within a 45-minute duration. The researcher's reflexivity and interactiveness informed the flexibility and intelligibility in the study instrument. The process increased synergy in using research design and analysis to extract essential leadership behaviors and added knowledge to the broader field of study (Flick, 1998). Analysis of interview data involved transcription and organization according to themes using NVivo12<sup>®</sup> data analysis software and member checking by participants. Accuracy in audio recording and transcribing also generated convincing intersection from data collection processes, data triangulation, choices about the site (setting) and participant selection (Lam, Lee, Taylor, & Zhao, 2018). Constant comparison, simultaneous critical thinking, on-going reflection and synthesis processes extricated credible themes from the avalanche of qualitative data and captured the essence of the data (Thomas, 2015; Neale, 2016). Triangulation was achieved from a convergence of interview responses, document review, and gleanings from observations as evidence to form themes or categories crucial to answering research questions. Triangulation helped increase the holistic picture, robust foundation, contribution to knowledge and validity of findings through increased correspondence between research and the real world (Bakari, 2014; Crowe et al., 2011; Farmer, Robinson, & Elliott, 2006; Gentles & Vilches, 2017).

### **Findings**

The keywords and catchphrases that arose from participant interviews led to the emergence of the mind map. The contexts embedded in participant comments led to the emergence of the themes. Leaders were entrenched in their agency mindset; they identified and crushed challenges that occurred, and collaborated across project teams, establishing a two-way

feedback system. Leaders also responded to staff feelings, deploying appropriate management-approved innovative training strategy.

In enunciating the principles that led to the emergence of the themes, participants insisted that a leader at the organization possess the relevant experience and show in words, body language, and actual deeds that he or she is committed to exposing employees to relevant experience. The leader must be a people-person, exhibiting skills, traits, and styles applicable thereto. The participants revealed time management as one of the essential ingredients that go with the required antecedents for the successful empowerment of employees. The mind map, therefore, helped in circumscribing the pros and cons of the subject of this research study.

Table 1

*Overall Thematic Representations*

Node	Node	Node Intensity
1	Leaders Should Entrench Agency Mindset	79
2	Identifying and Crushing Challenges Should Occur	134
3	Employees Should Collaborate Across Project Teams	61
4	Establishing a Two-Way Feedback System is Required	143
5	Leaders Should Respond to Staff Feelings	59
6	The Organization Should Deploy Appropriate Strategy	213
7	Management Should Implement Constant Training on Innovations	102

The thematic representations emerging from the multi-iteration process (Table 1) revealed an emphasis on keywords. Those keywords were *training, strategy, staff feelings, top-*

*down and down-top feedback, collaboration, challenges, and agency.* Of critical importance was the weight of each keyword in charting the course for the emergence of the themes. As each word or phrase continuously reverberated, the need for contexts arose, thereby lending flesh to the words and phrases. Sooner or later, the process of sense making helped to capture meanings pertaining to each keyword and phrase.

*Per Zone Theme-Specific References*

Theme	Cumulative	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6
Agency	79	10	3	16	31	9	10
Mindset							
Challenges	134	27	25	21	18	22	21
Collaborative	61	11	5	8	9	12	15
Feedback	143	23	27	33	18	19	23
Staff	59	6	4	11	28	6	4
Feelings							
Strategy	213	64	50	12	22	20	45
Training	102	19	10	17	15	24	17

The emerged themes and their reference details were juxtaposed to comprehend the zonal tilt of knowledge, experience, emotions, and commitment on the part of the participants. Table 10 revealed participant comments, some of which were positive and others negative. Greater light was shed on how much interest participants from the different zones shared experiences while answering interview questions.

Findings and discussion of this study were grouped for adequate triangulation base on result derived from interview data, document review and observation data. The themes that emerged were associated with specific research questions. The themes were not individually exclusive to the two research questions. However, the themes so categorized overlapped both research questions to indicate association. Consequently, some themes constitute responses to both research questions.

Participants viewed their activities from the angle of organizational programs. Everything revolved around the entity. Thus, situations occasionally arose that compelled them to seek external alternatives, which they referred to as “thinking outside the box.” Thinking about the agency meant giving to and taking from the agency. Employees gave their time and talent to the agency in the normal course of their professional activities. In like manner, employees took (or expected to take) from the agency remunerations appropriate to the tasks facing such employees. Participants expressed the expectation that the organizational leaders should make the organization accessible to the employees as parts of empowerment strategy. However, employees occasionally found inefficiencies in the system hindered such empowerment. For instance, Participant 26 stated, “empowerment strategy is not as expected because of inefficient finance to carry out elaborate programs of the agency that can make a difference.” This participant viewed empowerment from the standpoint of an equipped organization. Considering that the major goal of the agency was to sensitize people, employees should be equipped with the necessary tools to carry out such sensitization activities. According to Participant 1, “the NOA employees are referred to as the arrowhead of the agency because they have direct contact with people,” and must effectively pass through its employees to make the requisite contact with the people. A participant explained that there were times the employees used their little earned salary

to carry out some major program of the agency. Several other employees echoed that experience, even though a few employees did not experience such draught. Confidentiality requirements in research forbade, in this instance, specific zone or zones and the applicability of this resource draught thereto. Viewing everything from the angle of the agency, a participant revealed that once the agency introduced a program, “the management would call a meeting, say, two days to the program to direct on how to carry out the program.” The participant further lamented that policy planners were often unrealistic in designing the programs of the agency, which affected the organization’s ability to empower the employees saddled with the responsibility to enter the communities and make the expected program impact. This deficiency could exist in one zonal and not in the other.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations were expected to give general direction to employees, leaders, researchers, and policymakers in public organizations. The first step towards achieving organizational success was an understanding of the problem of an unempowered work unit negatively impacting employees, organizations, and society. The rich data generated from the findings informed the researcher’s recommendations on the leadership strategies to mitigate identified problems. In the hyper-turbulent Nigerian society, sustainable employee empowerment was an essential prescription for humanizing the work environment for organizational success.

Leadership styles should be strategic enough to create stable modes of behaviors to increase influence, establishing the appropriate essence of leadership (Mauri, 2017). Leaders should create an adequate empowerment arena for all three tiers, and levels of governance guarantee organizational efficiency, productivity, assertiveness in achieving goals, significant

innovations, and a positive impact on society. To that extent, the study contributes to the management literature by extending antecedents of collective empowerment in seven identified thematic ways. An underlying paradox confronting leader in the Nigerian public entities is the complexity of empowering employees against the steep and declining economies within a pluralist national culture.

The recommendation to develop a sound strategy on e-governance was conspicuous. Pertinent elements were directly associated with perspectives for the more explicit association of the topical factors as follows:

- 1) Employees Should Collaborate across Project Teams: project team participation experience, selection to team projects, interaction with external bodies, leader influence on team selection.
- 2) Establishing a Two-Way Feedback System is Required: top-down communication, granting employee requests, verifying employee needs, and initiating internal contact structural defects and inferior technology.
- 3) Employee–HR self-service: Consequently, a platform that equates with 21st-century dynamics of easier accessibility to employees, vertical and horizontal associations with HR via the corporate intranet and Internet may energize future public entities. A combination of electronic media and active participation of employees drives technology, lowers administration costs, maintains employee record, ensures legal compliance, improves employee communication and decision-making and strategic alignment. Employee–HR self-service systems is a combination of employee and management on-demand concept to revolutionize data management and people processes and simplifies management of resources across networks to increase accessibility to critical information,

increase employee retention and enable better communication across groups to create a high-performance organization.

### **Conclusion**

Leadership is considered a vital relational influential factor in employee empowerment. Employee empowerment is dynamic, complex, and multifaceted. It was essential to address the continuous dissatisfaction of employees over the lack of empowerment. The past literature did not show how leadership would empower employees in NOA. It takes leaders who can demonstrate an understanding of structural formations in an organization as well as of the antecedents of idealized influence/charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Bass,1985) to achieve genuine empowerment of employees in Nigerian public entities. Without any current study on the leadership antecedents in employee empowerment among the Nigerian public entities, the researcher was able to bridge the gap with the findings of the present study. The recommendations are focused on leadership antecedents in developing future leaders by improving collaborations along with the feedback mechanism, improving e-governance, constant training, and integrating shared and participative leadership styles. An Employee–HR self-service systems platform that equates with 21st-century dynamics will position public organizations for competitive advantage.

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