

# Relationship between Principals' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Indiscipline in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study aimed at determining the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' indiscipline in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. Two sets of questionnaire, the Principals' Leadership Style Descriptive Questionnaire (PLSDQ) and the Teachers' Indiscipline Descriptive Questionnaire (TIDQ) were constructed by the researcher, and they were validated by three experts. Descriptive Survey design was adopted. A sample size of 120 teachers was used. Mean score and Pearson product moment correlation were used to provide answers to the research questions. The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between the principal leadership styles namely autocratic and democratic leadership style with teachers' indiscipline. This relationship was significant for teachers of different years of experience. Recommendations were finally made for an improvement.

**Keywords:** Determining the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' indiscipline.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on the relationship between the principals' leadership styles and the teachers' indiscipline in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Various school principals adopt various leadership styles in their school administration. There are various leadership styles such as Democratic autocratic transactional and Laissez – faire. Democratic school principal is a leader who stresses the school goals and objectives more and places importance upon conformity with general rules. This principal is more concerned with the school than the personal benefits or comfort of his staff. He imbibes the views of his staff and makes the best of them for school goals. Autocratic principal stresses the school goals and objectives to the neglect of, or at the expense of the staff needs. He rigidly follows the school patterns and norms to achieve the school objectives.

The Transactional principal tries to see that both organizational goals and objectives and staff goals or needs are achieved. He tries to balance the two concerned groups. So, it is a mixture of autocracy and democracy. The principal here plays hot and cool depending on the current situation on ground. Laissez fair type of school principal has no clear cut goals and also gives no professional leadership to his staff. He does not plan out work schedule and has no known pattern of working or supervising or initiating actions.

These types of leadership styles usually lead to different organizational climates which may be: (1) reluctant climate: For the autocratic leadership style this is a climate in which members of the group perform their tasks unwillingly and with no pleasure. Their hearts are not in what they do. They only feel compelled to do it to avoid getting into trouble with the leader (principal). Work in this type of climate is therefore most unproductive (2) Official climate: The democratic leader creates an official climate where there is not much interaction between the members (staff) of the group as individuals except officially. One line of interaction and communication is enforced. (3) Open climate: This is the type of climate generated by democratic transactional leader (principal). This climate depicts a situation in which members enjoy extremely high "spirit-de corps. Members of staff work well together without bickering. They enjoy friendly relations with each other. There is job satisfaction and they are sufficiently motivated to overcome frustrations. (4) Confused Climate: What else does one expect from a work environment where the leader shows a lack-luster or lackadaisical

attitude other than confusion, chaos and anarchy? Things are confused and they eventually fall apart. Members of the group obtain little satisfaction. Discipline is weak and no pattern is set for anything in this laissez-faire style of leadership.

For the purpose of this study, let us concentrate on two major and demarcated types of leadership styles –autocratic and democratic. The theoretical analysis of contemporary leadership, associated with Charisma and participatory administration, provide a window of opportunity for principals to positively influence staff to perform beyond expectations (Leithwood 1994 and Roach 1994). Alteri (1995) and Berson (1999) were of the opinion that autocratic leadership is capable of goals achievement through clear strong lines of direction and communication and compliance that are essential in enforcing staff discipline. The assumption behind the theoretical postulations is that democratic leadership might be more closely associated with teacher indiscipline than autocratic leadership.

In Ebonyi State, cases of teacher indiscipline have been reported (Nwakpa 2008), such acts of teacher indiscipline include absenteeism, lateness to duty, poor teaching, examination malpractice, laziness, extortion, loitering among others. In the face of these reports, one begins to wonder whether teacher indiscipline is higher in schools where teachers perceived the leadership principals' style to be more democratic than autocratic. So far, there are few of any research investigation around Ebonyi State that relates teacher indiscipline to the autocratic and democratic leadership styles of principals. Thus, the problem of this study is, therefore, what is the strength of the relationship between principals' leadership style and teachers' indiscipline in Ebonyi State of Nigeria?

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' indiscipline in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Specifically this study sought to determine:

1. The degree of the relationship if any between leadership styles of principals and indiscipline among male and female teachers
- 2) The strength of the relationship, if any between the leadership styles of principals and indiscipline among Urban and Rural teachers and
- 3) If the leadership styles of principals would be significantly associated with indiscipline among beginning and experienced teachers.

### Research Questions:

Three research questions guided the study, they are: (1) what is the nature of the relationship between the leadership style of principals and indiscipline among male and female teachers? (2) What is the relationship between the leadership style of principals and indiscipline among teachers in Urban and Rural schools? (3) What is the nature of the relationship between the leadership style of principals and level of indiscipline among beginning and experienced teachers?

**Research Design:** This study was a correnational study. According to Clark (1996), a correnational study is a survey of the extent of relationships or lack of it between two major variables. The purpose was to investigate the extent to which variables in one or more other factors or subjects relates to variables in another factor based on correlation coefficients. Thus, in this study, the design was used to clarify through the use of correlation coefficients, the degree of the relationship or lack of it between principals' leadership style and the acts of indiscipline among teachers in Ebonyi State.

### Area of the Study:

This study was carried out in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Ebonyi State is made up of three Education Zones, namely, Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke education zones. These three education zones are centrally controlled by a State Secondary Education Board (SEB) at Abakaliki, the capital of Ebonyi State.

Based on data obtained from Secondary Education Board, Abakaliki (2014), the target population for this study consisted of 3025 who are teaching in the 162 public secondary schools in the state as at the time of this study.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques:

The sample for this study comprised 40% of 3025, which is 1,210 teachers, and 40% of 162 schools which is 64 schools were selected through stratified random sampling. Thus, 31 secondary schools were selected from each of the three education zones. Nworgu (1991) recommended that a sample of 40% is ideal for descriptive studies.

### 3. INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researcher constructed two sets of questionnaire titled: Principals' Leadership Style Descriptive Questionnaire (PLSDQ) and the Teachers Indiscipline Descriptive Questionnaire (TIDQ). The construction of the questionnaire was guided by a collection of views and findings from related literature and survey instruments. Each of the questionnaires is divided into two parts. Part A was the introductory section. It comprised 4 open ended statements that elicited background information on the respondents' gender, education zone, school location, and years of experience. Part B of the PLSDQ comprised 25 items, 10 of these items were concerned with the autocratic leadership style while 10 were concerned with democratic leadership style. Part B of the TIDQ also comprised 20 items that were concerned with teacher indiscipline. The items were structured on a modified Liker type four points scale weighted as follows: strongly agree (4 points) agree (3 points) disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point).

#### Validation and Reliability of Instrument:

Three experts in Educational Foundations Department of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki validated the instruments. Test-retest procedure using Pearson Product Moment Correlation was adopted in obtaining the reliability of the instruments. The PLSDQ and TIDQ yielded coefficients of 0.78 and 0.83 respectively. These results indicated high reliability of the two instruments. Thus, they were considered satisfactory for the study.

### 4. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher personally visited all the sampled schools and administered the questionnaire on the teachers. In all, a total of 1,210 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. However, 1,200 copies were used for the study, as 6 copies were not recovered and 4 copies were wrongly filled by the respondents.

### 5. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Pearson product moment correlation was used in answering the research questions.

#### Data Analysis and presentation of Results:

**Research Question 1:** what is the nature of the relationship between the leadership styles of principals and indiscipline among male and female teachers?

The mean scores of the respondents on the questionnaire items on leadership styles were correlated with their mean scores on the items for indiscipline using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Each of the leadership styles (Autocratic and Democratic) was correlated with the mean scores of male and female teachers. The summary is shown in table 1:

**Table 1: Computation of Pearson "r" for the Relationship between Autocratic Leadership Style and Indiscipline Among Male and Female Teachers.**

S/N	VARIABLES	X – MALE	Y – FEMALE	X <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	XY	R
1.	Autocratic leadership style (x) and male leaders indiscipline (y)	41.31	34.20	1177.6	1163.23	132180	0.56
2.	Autocratic leadership style and female teacher indiscipline	4.31	60.7	1697.27	3639.18	433714	0.84
3.	Democratic leadership style and male teachers indiscipline	34.2	60.8	1169.60	3639.20	42564	0.93
4.	Democratic leaderships style and female teachers indiscipline	34.2	60.5	1169.91	3524.04	42398	0.26

In table 1, the autocratic leadership style of principals was strongly and positively correlated with indiscipline among male and female teachers ( $r = 0.56$  and  $0.82$ ). The autocratic leadership style on the other hand had strong and positive correlation with indiscipline among male teachers but had weak correlation with indiscipline among female teachers.

**Research Question Two:** What is the leadership between the leadership styles of principals and indiscipline among teachers in urban and rural schools?

The mean scores of the respondents on the questionnaire items on the leadership styles were correlated with their mean scores on the items for indiscipline using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Each of the leadership styles (Autocratic and Democratic) was correlated with the mean scores of indiscipline of urban and rural teachers.

**Table 2: Computation of Pearson (r) for the Relationship between Leadership Styles and Indiscipline among Urban and Rural Teachers**

S/N	VARIABLES	X MALE	Y FEMALE	X <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	XY	R
1.	Autocratic leadership (X) and urban teachers indiscipline (Y)	39.89	91.35	1592.81	8145.08	98378.09	0.68
2.	Autocratic leadership and rural teachers discipline	39.89	85.61	592.84	310.13	9018.4	0.56
3.	Democratic leadership and urban teachers indiscipline (Y)	36.70	61.52	1169.66	378.26	49540.66	0.34
4.	Democratic leadership and rural teachers indiscipline (Y)	36.70	59.03	1169.90	3481.08	46536.4	0.30

The results presented in table 2 show that the autocratic leadership style of principals was strongly and positively correlated with indiscipline among urban and rural teachers with correlation values of 0.68 and 0.56 respectively. The democratic leadership style on the other hand, has weak but positive correlations with indiscipline among urban and rural teachers.

### Research Question Three:

What is the nature of the relationship between the leadership styles of principals and indiscipline among beginning and experienced teachers'?

For this research question, the mean scores of the respondents on the questionnaire items on leadership styles were correlated with their mean scores on the items for indiscipline using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Each of the leadership styles (autocratic and democratic) was correlated with the mean scores of indiscipline by teachers' years of experience. The summary of the result is as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Computation of Pearson "r" for the Relationship between Leadership Styles and Indiscipline Among Beginning and Experienced Teachers.**

S/N	VARIABLES	Correlation Coefficient	Remark
1.	Automatic leadership and indiscipline among beginning teachers	0.3184	Weak and positive
2.	Autocratic leadership and indiscipline among experience teachers	0.8211	Strong and positive
3.	Democratic leadership and indiscipline among beginning teachers:	0.3812	Weak and positive
4.	Democratic leadership and indiscipline among experienced teachers	0.2324	Weak and positive

The results presented in table 3 show that the autocratic leadership style of principals was positively correlated with indiscipline among beginning and experienced teachers with correlation values of 0.32 and 0.82 respectively. The democratic leadership style on the hand has weak but positive correlations with indiscipline among beginning and experienced teachers.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the perceived principals' leadership styles and teacher indiscipline. The findings showed apart from weak correlation with indiscipline among beginning teachers, the autocratic leadership was strongly correlated with indiscipline among male, female, urban and experienced teachers. This means that the autocratic leadership style is highly associated with indiscipline among teachers of different biographic orientations; Cheng (1994) also found a significant correlation between female principals' leadership styles and teacher commitment noting that where teachers perceived their principals to be flexible and considerate, teacher commitment tends to be high. In fact, in this study, with the exception of indiscipline among beginning teachers with a correlation coefficient of 0.15, the rest of the correlations were above 0.56, indicating that more than 56 percent of the variations in teacher indiscipline could be predicted through the autocratic leadership style. This finding is quite disturbing as it suggests that the high level of indiscipline among male and female teachers has to do with the autocratic leadership styles of their principals. The higher the number of autocratic principals, the higher the level of indiscipline among teacher. Even the weak correlation with beginning teachers are new in the system, they may be more discipline in performing their duties as to impress their bosses. Perhaps if the teachers had stayed longer in the system, their level of indiscipline might also be high.

This trend is likely to continue in the future unless some measures are put in place to ensure that principals engage in leadership behaviours that elicit a high level of discipline from teachers. The democratic leadership behaviour on the other hand was shown to be strongly correlated to the indiscipline among male teachers. It was however weakly correlated to indiscipline among female, urban, rural and experienced teachers. The results of the t –test for the significance of the correlations between the leadership styles and indiscipline among urban and rural teachers was a significant relationship between principal's leadership styles and indiscipline among male and female teachers, urban and rural teachers and beginning teachers.

A look at the correlation coefficients indicated that except for experienced teachers' indiscipline (0.46), the rest of the correlations were below 0.40. In other words the democrat leadership could explain less than 40 percent of the variations in teacher indiscipline. The reason for this may not be far-fetched. Responses for questionnaire items for research question one and three revealed that principals among other things inform teachers of major decision issues, make clear expectations of outcomes and reward, and set standards of achievement.

Consistent with this finding, Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992) noted that informing teachers of decisions and setting clear expectations and standards increase the understanding of the group and also their commitment to the standards. Therefore, when teachers understand what is expected of them, the tendency to be disciplined and avoid sanctions may be high. The significance of the weak correlations cautions against dismissing, as negligible, the low correlations between democratic leadership and teacher indiscipline. Democratic leadership after all does explain some variations in teacher indiscipline especially with regards to experienced teachers. In this case, experienced teachers might because they have been in the system long enough, know the limits of the principals' power. They may engage in indiscipline behaviours not minding the leadership style of the principals. This finding agrees with the stipulation of Varaki (2003) that there is a high positive relationship between principals' leadership behaviours and discipline or lack of it among teachers and students.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made: (1) principals should use authority and sanctions when necessary to enforce discipline among teachers. (2) Teachers should be empowered to become more disciplined (3) principal should show concern for teachers' needs but in a manger that will make teachers take them for granted. (4) In-service education for principals on leadership styles should be regularly organized. (5) Principals should endeavour to timely inform teachers of vital issues and always make clear the schools' expectations and standard so that the teachers

would be more disciplined. (6) Teachers should recognize their principals as their bosses and accord them their due respect, and in this same vein, principals should live life of emulation and also respect their teachers.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study suggests that the leadership style principals adopt might increase or decrease the level of indiscipline among teachers of different gender, school location and years of experience. In other words, male and female teachers, in different school locations and with different years of experience may be influenced to engage in undisciplined behaviours in reaction to their perceptions of the leadership styles of principals. Discussions on the relationship between the leadership styles of principals cannot therefore be concluded without a consideration of how the teachers perceive their principals' leadership styles. In this case, if principals would change their leadership style, they may do so in a manner that would change or influence the perceptions of the teachers. This way, the changed perceptions of teachers are likely to affect their levels of discipline.

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