



Contemporary Educational Leadership Styles and Teachers' Productivity in Primary Schools in South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Educational leadership remains a critical determinant of teachers' productivity and the overall effectiveness of primary education. This study examined the relationship between contemporary educational leadership styles and teachers' productivity in public primary schools in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of transformational, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles on teachers' productivity. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised all head teachers and teachers in public primary schools within the study area. A sample of 200 respondents was selected using a stratified random sampling technique with proportionate allocation and simple random sampling. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: The Educational Leadership Styles Questionnaire (ELSQ) and the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ). Face and content validity were established by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, while the reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions, whereas Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that transformational leadership ($r = 0.72, p < 0.05$) and democratic leadership ($r = 0.67, p < 0.05$) had significant positive relationships with teachers' productivity, whereas autocratic leadership demonstrated a significant but negative relationship with teachers' productivity. The study concluded that participatory and transformational leadership practices contribute substantially to improved teachers' productivity and school effectiveness. It recommended sustained leadership development programmes for head teachers and the institutionalisation of participatory leadership practices to enhance teachers' commitment and instructional performance in public primary schools.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Teachers' Productivity, Primary Schools

Introduction

Educational leadership has increasingly been recognised as a critical determinant of school effectiveness, teacher performance, and learners' academic achievement across educational systems worldwide. The quality of leadership exercised by school administrators shapes the organisational climate, influences teachers' professional commitment, and determines the extent to which educational objectives are achieved. In primary education, where teachers constitute the foundation of pupils' cognitive, social, and emotional development, effective leadership is indispensable for enhancing instructional quality and sustaining teachers' productivity. Consequently, contemporary educational reforms have shifted attention from traditional administrative functions to leadership practices that foster collaboration, innovation, professional development, and shared decision-making. Leadership style refers to the pattern of behaviour, strategies, and approaches adopted by leaders in directing, motivating, and influencing

subordinates towards the attainment of organisational goals. Within educational settings, leadership style determines how head teachers communicate expectations, allocate responsibilities, resolve conflicts, motivate staff, and create conditions that promote effective teaching and learning. Northouse (2021) observed that leadership extends beyond the exercise of authority to include the ability to inspire followers, build trust, and facilitate organisational improvement. Similarly, Bush (2019) argued that effective educational leadership promotes institutional effectiveness through collaborative relationships, teacher empowerment, and strategic decision-making. Among contemporary leadership approaches, transformational leadership has attracted considerable scholarly attention because of its capacity to inspire teachers to exceed routine expectations. Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision, encourage innovation, provide intellectual stimulation, and recognise individual contributions, thereby fostering higher levels of commitment and professional effectiveness. Evidence from recent empirical studies indicates that transformational leadership positively influences teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and instructional performance (Parveen et al., 2022; Wu, 2025). Such leadership practices create an enabling environment in which teachers willingly embrace educational reforms and demonstrate greater productivity

Democratic leadership, also referred to as participative leadership, constitutes another contemporary leadership approach that emphasises consultation, teamwork, transparency, and collective decision-making. Through active involvement of teachers in administrative processes, democratic leadership enhances ownership of institutional goals and strengthens interpersonal relationships within schools. Hoque and Raya (2023) reported that schools characterised by participatory leadership often experience improved teacher morale, stronger organisational commitment, and enhanced instructional effectiveness. Similarly, Nellitawati (2020) found that teachers who actively participate in school governance demonstrate greater motivation and commitment to their professional responsibilities. Conversely, autocratic leadership is characterised by centralized authority, unilateral decision-making, and limited participation of subordinates in administrative processes. Although this leadership style may facilitate rapid decision-making in specific situations, excessive dependence on authoritarian practices often suppresses creativity, reduces teacher motivation, weakens interpersonal trust, and limits professional collaboration. Bariham and Tiymba (2024) observed that autocratic leadership is generally associated with lower levels of teachers' job satisfaction and organisational commitment, thereby adversely affecting productivity and school effectiveness. Teachers' productivity represents the extent to which teachers effectively discharge their professional responsibilities in achieving educational objectives. It encompasses lesson preparation, classroom instruction, learner assessment, classroom management, professional development, punctuality, and participation in co-curricular and administrative activities. Productive teachers significantly contribute to learners' academic success and institutional effectiveness. Consequently, educational stakeholders increasingly recognise leadership quality as one of the principal organisational factors capable of enhancing or constraining teachers' productivity.

Conceptual Framework

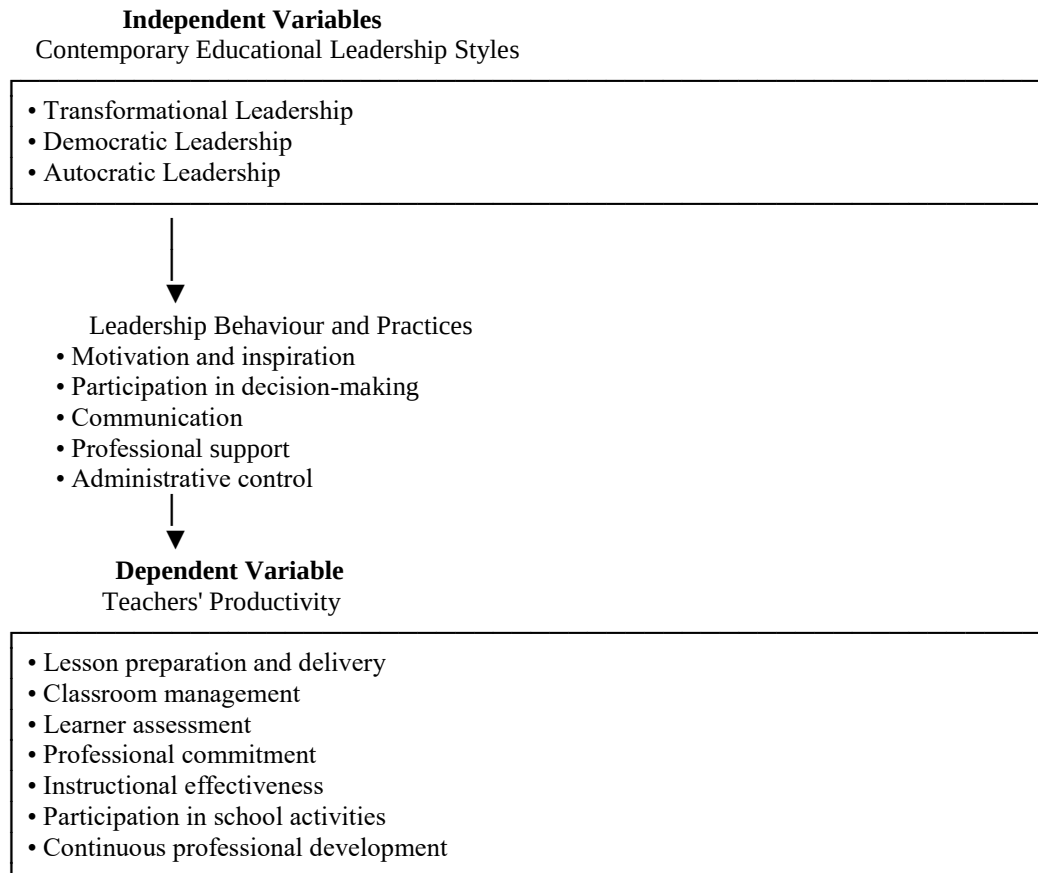
The conceptual framework illustrates the presumed relationship between contemporary educational leadership styles and teachers' productivity in public primary schools. The framework is founded on the premise that leadership behaviour adopted by head teachers significantly influences teachers' attitudes, motivation, commitment, instructional effectiveness, and overall productivity. Within this framework, educational leadership styles constitute the independent variables, while teachers' productivity represents the dependent variable.

The study focuses on three contemporary leadership styles, namely transformational leadership, democratic leadership, and autocratic leadership. Transformational leadership is characterised by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, and the development of a shared vision. Democratic leadership promotes participatory decision-making, teamwork, effective communication, and shared responsibility. In contrast, autocratic leadership is characterised by centralised authority, unilateral decision-making, limited staff participation, and rigid administrative control.

Teachers' productivity is operationalised through measurable indicators, including lesson preparation and delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, professional commitment, punctuality, instructional effectiveness, participation in school activities, and continuous professional development. The framework assumes that transformational and democratic leadership styles positively influence teachers' productivity by improving motivation, collaboration, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Conversely, excessive reliance on autocratic leadership is expected to reduce teachers' morale, limit creativity, weaken organisational commitment, and consequently diminish

productivity. Thus, variations in leadership style are expected to account for corresponding variations in teachers' productivity within public primary schools.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Educational Leadership Styles and Teachers' Productivity



Source: Researcher's Conceptualisation (2026)

The framework demonstrates that leadership practices adopted by head teachers directly influence teachers' productivity. While transformational and democratic leadership styles are expected to enhance productivity through motivation, collaboration, and professional support, autocratic leadership may negatively affect productivity by reducing teachers' participation, commitment, and morale. The framework therefore provides the conceptual basis upon which the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses were formulated.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary leadership theories that provide a sound theoretical explanation for the relationship between contemporary educational leadership styles and teachers' productivity in public primary schools. The theories were selected because they directly explain the independent variables investigated in the study and provide an appropriate foundation for interpreting the empirical findings.

Transformational Leadership Theory was first proposed by Burns (1978) and subsequently expanded by Bass (1985). The theory posits that effective leaders inspire followers to transcend personal interests in pursuit of collective organisational goals. Rather than relying on authority or rewards alone, transformational leaders motivate followers through a compelling vision, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, and exemplary leadership behaviour. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership comprises four fundamental dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealised influence enables leaders to serve as role models whose ethical conduct earns the respect and confidence of followers.

Inspirational motivation encourages leaders to articulate a clear organisational vision that motivates followers towards improved performance. Intellectual stimulation promotes innovation and creativity by encouraging followers to question conventional practices and explore alternative approaches to problem-solving. Individualised consideration focuses on recognising individual differences and providing mentorship, professional guidance, and emotional support.

Within the educational system, transformational leadership is reflected in head teachers who encourage teamwork, provide opportunities for professional development, recognise teachers' achievements, and cultivate an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Such leadership practices enhance teachers' commitment, motivation, instructional effectiveness, and willingness to contribute beyond their routine responsibilities. The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its explanation of how transformational leadership behaviours influence teachers' productivity. The theory provides the conceptual basis for examining whether inspirational leadership practices adopted by head teachers improve teachers' professional commitment, classroom performance, instructional delivery, and overall productivity in public primary schools.

Path–Goal Theory

Path–Goal Theory was developed by House (1971) to explain how leaders facilitate followers' performance by clarifying goals, eliminating obstacles, and providing the necessary support for successful task accomplishment. The theory argues that leaders improve organisational effectiveness by selecting leadership behaviours appropriate to the characteristics of followers and the prevailing work environment.

House identified four major leadership behaviours under the theory: directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership, and achievement-oriented leadership. Directive leaders provide clear instructions and expectations regarding task performance. Supportive leaders demonstrate concern for the welfare and personal needs of followers. Participative leaders actively involve followers in decision-making processes, while achievement-oriented leaders encourage followers to pursue challenging goals and maintain high performance standards.

The theory assumes that leadership effectiveness depends on the extent to which leaders create favourable conditions that enable followers to achieve organisational objectives. In educational institutions, head teachers who provide instructional resources, remove administrative constraints, encourage participation, and offer professional support create an environment that promotes teachers' effectiveness and productivity.

The relevance of Path–Goal Theory to this study lies in its explanation of democratic leadership practices. By encouraging participation, collaboration, open communication, and supportive supervision, democratic leadership enables teachers to perform their professional responsibilities more effectively, thereby improving productivity and overall school effectiveness.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, developed by Douglas McGregor (1960), explain organisational leadership based on managers' assumptions regarding employee behaviour. The theory proposes two contrasting perspectives concerning workers' attitudes towards work and responsibility. Theory X assumes that employees naturally dislike work, avoid responsibility, require close supervision, and must be controlled through strict rules and external sanctions. Leaders who adopt these assumptions often rely on authoritarian leadership characterised by rigid supervision, centralised decision-making, and limited employee participation. Conversely, Theory Y assumes that employees are self-motivated, capable of accepting responsibility, committed to organisational objectives, and able to exercise creativity when provided with supportive working conditions. Leaders operating from Theory Y therefore encourage participation, trust, empowerment, professional development, and collaborative decision-making. Within educational organisations, Theory X explains the emergence of autocratic leadership practices that may suppress teachers' initiative, creativity, and professional commitment. In contrast, Theory Y supports democratic and transformational leadership approaches that empower teachers and enhance productivity through motivation, trust, and shared responsibility. The relevance of McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y to this study is that it provides a theoretical explanation for the contrasting effects of autocratic and participatory leadership styles on teachers' productivity. The theory suggests that leadership practices based on trust, participation, and empowerment are more

likely to produce motivated and productive teachers than leadership characterised by excessive control and authoritarian administration.

Justification for the Adoption of the Theories

The three theories were adopted because together they comprehensively explain the leadership styles examined in this study. Transformational Leadership Theory provides the foundation for understanding inspirational leadership behaviours, Path–Goal Theory explains supportive and participatory leadership practices, while McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y explain the contrasting outcomes associated with democratic and autocratic leadership. Collectively, the theories provide an appropriate theoretical foundation for examining how contemporary educational leadership styles influence teachers' productivity in public primary schools in Rivers South-East Senatorial District.

Despite growing empirical evidence linking leadership styles with teachers' productivity, many public primary schools in Nigeria continue to experience challenges relating to ineffective leadership practices, inadequate teacher motivation, poor communication, weak participatory governance, and declining instructional effectiveness. These challenges are particularly evident in several public primary schools where administrative practices remain predominantly hierarchical, thereby limiting teachers' involvement in school management and reducing opportunities for collaborative decision-making. Such conditions may adversely affect teachers' commitment, innovation, and overall productivity. Although several empirical studies have investigated educational leadership and teachers' productivity in different geographical contexts, relatively few have specifically examined the influence of contemporary leadership styles within public primary schools in Rivers South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Existing studies have largely concentrated on secondary schools, higher education institutions, or other regions of Nigeria, thereby creating limited empirical evidence for this educational context. Furthermore, variations in socio-cultural, institutional, and administrative environments suggest that findings from other regions may not necessarily be generalizable to public primary schools within the study area. It is against this background that this study investigated the relationship between transformational, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles and teachers' productivity in public primary schools in Rivers South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence capable of informing educational policy, strengthening leadership development programmes for head teachers, and promoting leadership practices that enhance teachers' productivity and overall school effectiveness. The study aims to:

- (1) Examine the relationship between transformational leadership style and teachers' productivity.
- (2) Determine the influence of democratic leadership style on teachers' productivity.
- (3) Investigate the effect of autocratic leadership style on teachers' productivity.

Research Questions

- (1) What is the relationship between transformational leadership style and teachers' productivity?
- (2) How does democratic leadership style influence teachers' productivity?
- (3) What effect does autocratic leadership style have on teachers' productivity?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between transformational leadership style and teachers' productivity.

H02: Democratic leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity.

H03: Autocratic leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of teachers and head teachers to examine the relationship between contemporary educational leadership styles and teachers' productivity without manipulating the study variables. The design also permitted the use of correlational statistics to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationships among the variables under investigation. The study was conducted in Rivers South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria. The district comprises the Local Government Areas of Andoni, Eleme, Gokana, Khana, Oyigbo, Opobo/Nkoro and Tai. Public primary schools within these Local Government Areas formed the geographical scope of the investigation. The area was selected because of its large concentration of public primary schools and the need to examine leadership practices within the district. The target population comprised 3,031

respondents, consisting of 2,845 teachers and 186 head teachers in all public primary schools within Rivers South-East Senatorial District during the 2025/2026 academic session. The population was obtained from the official records of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB, 2025). A sample of 200 respondents was drawn from the target population. The sample size was considered adequate for correlation analysis and was proportionately distributed across the seven Local Government Areas to ensure adequate representation of teachers and head teachers. A multistage probability sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, the study area was stratified according to the seven Local Government Areas that constitute Rivers South-East Senatorial District. In the second stage, proportionate allocation was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each Local Government Area based on the population of teachers and head teachers. In the final stage, simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents from the sampling frame obtained from the respective public primary schools. The use of probability sampling ensured that every eligible respondent had an equal opportunity of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample and supporting the use of inferential statistical techniques.

Data were collected using two researcher-developed questionnaires:

1. Educational Leadership Styles Questionnaire (ELSQ).
2. Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ).

The instruments consisted of two sections. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained items measuring transformational leadership, democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, and teachers' productivity.

Responses were measured on a four-point Likert rating scale as follows:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 4
- Agree (A) = 3
- Disagree (D) = 2
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by two experts, one in Educational Management and another in Measurement and Evaluation, both from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Their observations and recommendations regarding clarity, relevance, language, and content coverage were incorporated before the final administration of the instruments.

The reliability of the instruments was determined through a pilot study involving respondents who possessed characteristics similar to those of the study population but were excluded from the main study. The data obtained were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique, which produced an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instruments possessed satisfactory internal consistency for the study.

The researcher obtained permission from the relevant educational authorities before administering the questionnaires. With the assistance of trained research assistants, copies of the questionnaires were distributed personally to the selected respondents and retrieved immediately after completion to minimise non-response and maximise the retrieval rate. The collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The following decision benchmark was adopted for interpreting the mean scores obtained from the four-point rating scale: For hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis was rejected whenever the probability (p-value) was less than or equal to 0.05. Conversely, where the probability value exceeded 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and teachers' productivity?

Table 1 Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Productivity

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Head teachers inspire teachers to perform better	3.64	0.56	Very High
2	Encourages motivation in teaching	3.58	0.60	Very High
3	Motivates teachers through recognition	3.50	0.63	Very High
4	Supports professional development	3.55	0.58	Very High
5	Improves teachers' productivity	3.61	0.55	Very High
	Grand Mean & SD	3.58	0.58	Very High

Table 1 revealed that Transformational leadership style has a very high positive relationship with teachers' productivity.

Research Question 2: How does democratic leadership style influence Teachers' productivity?

Table2 Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Democratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Productivity

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Teachers participate in decision-making	3.46	0.64	High
7	Head teacher promotes teamwork	3.52	0.57	Very High
8	Open communication exists	3.48	0.61	High
9	Teachers feel valued	3.44	0.66	High
10	Productivity improves through participation	3.49	0.60	High
	Grand Mean & SD	3.48	0.62	High Extent

Table 2 reveals that Democratic Leadership Style has a strong positive influence on teachers' productivity.

Research Question 3: What effect does Autocratic Leadership Style have on Teachers' productivity?

Table 3 Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Autocratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Productivity

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Head teacher makes decisions alone	2.28	0.74	Low
12	Teachers are strict	2.40	0.69	Low
13	Teachers feel less motivated	2.22	0.76	Low
14	One-way communication	2.35	0.71	Low
15	Productivity declines	2.30	0.73	Low
	Grand Mean & SD	2.31	0.73	Low Extent

Table 3 reveals that the grand mean is 2.31 and the corresponding standard deviation indicates that Autocratic Leadership Style has a low and negative effect on Teachers' Productivity.

Test of Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' productivity

Table 4: Showing significant relationship between transformational leadership and Teachers' productivity

Variable	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Transformational vs Productivity	200	0.72	0.000	Reject HO ₁

Table 4 reveals that a positive relationship exists between transformational leadership and Teachers' productivity.

H02: Democratic Leadership does not significantly influence Teachers' productivity

Table 5: Showing significant relationship between Democratic leadership and Teachers' productivity

Variable	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Democratic Productivity	vs 200	0.67	0.000	Reject HO ₂

Table 5 revealed that Democratic Leadership Style significantly improves teachers' productivity.

H03: Autocratic Leadership has no significant effect on teachers' productivity

Table 6: Showing significant relationship between Autocratic leadership and Teachers' productivity

Variable	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Autocratic Productivity	vs 200	0.45	0.002	Reject HO ₃

Table 6 reveals that Autocratic Leadership Style significantly but negatively affects Teachers' Productivity.

Discussion

The findings revealed that transformational leadership exhibited the strongest positive relationship with teachers' productivity ($r = 0.72$). This finding suggests that head teachers who motivate staff, provide professional support, encourage innovation, and recognise teachers' achievements create an enabling environment that enhances instructional effectiveness and professional commitment. The finding supports Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), which argues that inspirational leadership motivates followers to exceed expected levels of performance. The result is also consistent with the findings of Parveen et al. (2022), who reported that transformational leadership significantly improves teachers' job performance, and Wu (2025), who found that transformational school leadership enhances teacher effectiveness. The consistency of these findings reinforces the argument that inspirational leadership behaviours remain fundamental to school effectiveness.

The study further established that democratic leadership significantly improved teachers' productivity ($r = 0.67$). This suggests that teachers become more committed and productive when they participate in decision-making processes, experience open communication, and perceive themselves as valued members of the school community. The finding lends empirical support to Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971), particularly its participative leadership dimension, which maintains that involving followers in organisational decisions enhances motivation and performance. The result corroborates the findings of Hoque and Raya (2023) and Nellitawati (2020), both of whom concluded that participatory leadership contributes significantly to teachers' commitment, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness. Although the correlation analysis indicated that autocratic leadership was statistically significant ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$), the descriptive analysis demonstrated that respondents generally perceived autocratic leadership as detrimental to teachers' productivity. This finding suggests that excessive administrative control, limited participation, and one-way communication may undermine teachers' morale and professional commitment despite the existence of a measurable relationship. The finding supports McGregor's Theory X, which explains that authoritarian leadership assumptions often suppress employee initiative and creativity. It also agrees with Bariham and Tiyumba (2024), who found that autocratic leadership is associated with lower teacher motivation and reduced job satisfaction.

The findings collectively demonstrate that leadership style constitutes an important organisational determinant of teachers' productivity in public primary schools. Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted within the context of certain methodological limitations. The study relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may have been influenced by respondents' personal perceptions and social desirability bias. Furthermore, because the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, the findings establish statistical relationships rather than definitive causal effects. Future studies may therefore employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of educational leadership on teachers' productivity over time.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between contemporary educational leadership styles and teachers' productivity in public primary schools in Rivers South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The findings demonstrated that leadership style remains a significant organisational factor influencing teachers' professional commitment, instructional effectiveness, and overall productivity. Specifically, the study established that transformational leadership had the strongest positive relationship with teachers' productivity, indicating that head teachers who inspire, mentor, recognise achievement, and encourage innovation create an enabling environment for improved instructional performance. Democratic leadership was also found to contribute significantly to teachers' productivity by promoting participation in decision-making, teamwork, open communication, and shared responsibility. Conversely, although autocratic leadership demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with teachers' productivity, respondents generally perceived excessive administrative control and limited participation as detrimental to motivation, collaboration, and professional commitment. The study therefore concludes that sustainable improvement in teachers' productivity depends largely on the adoption of participatory, supportive, and transformational leadership practices. School administrators who cultivate collaborative working relationships, invest in teachers' professional growth, and encourage shared decision-making are more likely to achieve improved educational outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Consequently, educational leadership development should remain a strategic priority for educational authorities responsible for the management of public primary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Head teachers should adopt transformational leadership practices by inspiring teachers through mentorship, professional recognition, continuous motivation, and opportunities for career development, as these practices significantly enhance teachers' productivity.
- School administrators should institutionalise democratic leadership practices by actively involving teachers in school decision-making, policy implementation, and collaborative problem-solving to strengthen commitment, accountability, and instructional effectiveness.
- Autocratic leadership practices should be minimised except where immediate administrative decisions are unavoidable. Educational administrators should encourage open communication, mutual respect, and teacher participation to promote positive organisational relationships and improve productivity.
- The Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) and the Ministry of Education should organise regular leadership development programmes for head teachers and other school administrators to strengthen their competencies in transformational and participatory leadership approaches.
- Educational policymakers should formulate and implement leadership policies that promote participatory school governance, continuous professional development, and periodic leadership performance evaluation as strategies for improving teachers' productivity and enhancing the quality of primary education.

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