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## **Communication and Leadership Styles for Effective Employee Motivation and Performance Management in Select Secondary Schools in the Post-COVID-19 Era**

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### **Abstract**

The continued existence of any school organisation essentially depends on the homeostatic capacity of its management team to maintain balance (i.e. favourable work environment) amidst internal and external disruptions, as well as its ability to maximise efficient utilisation of its resources to achieve corporate set goals. However, realities of business practice in the post-COVID-19 era, have shown that, of the 87% of Nigerian businesses negatively affected by the pandemic, many failed to recover from the shock waves of COVID-19, while several others are still struggling to improve at a slow growth rate due to negligence in adopting a learning approach to management. Consequently, communication and leadership styles of management of some secondary institutions of learning experiencing this setback focuses more on the traditional, but rigid modus operandi which emphasises 'output optimisation' and 'profit maximisation' at all exploitative cost, without recourse to innovative strategies that motivate and promote the sustainability of their subordinate employees in the long-run. This, in turn, leads to low commitment, high staff turnover, low frustration tolerance and burn-out, among other indicators of job dissatisfaction, which account for low employee performance in those organisations. Against this backdrop, the researchers, therefore, propose Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership model which provides an *a la carte* of alternative leadership styles for dealing with employees, who have different readiness or development level in their job performance. It also explores, through library research methods, a range of integrative communication styles that blend with leadership styles to bolster employee morale and promote effective employee performance management, while advocating a learning approach to management for enhanced business success.

**Keywords:** Communication, Leadership, Motivation, Employee Performance, Management

### **Introduction**

The success of any school's administration in the Post COVID-19 era, essentially depends on managers' effective management of resources that guarantee effective

teaching and learning. Employees are, among other resources, considered the most important agent of production in schools, given that they supply the needed services that make teaching and learning possible (Molla, 2019; Ngarajah, Medawala & Rathnayake, 2021). Given the crucial role employees play in school operation, managers are expected to give top priority to employee concerns as regarding their job task considerations and motivational needs and provide a favourable work environment that enhances effective job performance. Among the several strategies by which managers are able to influence their employee to be at their best work behaviour and contribute optimally, is the use of effective communication styles and leadership orientations that adapt to the situational needs as well as the maturity levels of their employees.

Communication, according to van Riel & Fombrum (2007), is the live blood of all organisations, thus, as blood provides the vessel through which essential nutrients are supplied to the various parts of the human body, so also communication provides the conduit channels by which meanings (in the form of all necessary information, in verbal, written and non-verbal and electronic formats) are transmitted, shared or co-created between managers and subordinate employees, as well as, among subordinate employees within the work environment. The pieces of information provided are essential to effective job performance because they direct the course of action of employees towards anticipated goals. The styles of communication managers adopt reflect the leadership orientations they lean on at any given time and situational circumstances. There are basically two orientations of leadership (which refers to the ways, in method and dispositions, by which a leader attempts to direct, motivate and manage others (Becker, 2022), that determines how managers are able to influence their subordinates towards the achievement of a vision or set of goals: the task orientation and relationship orientation (Robbins & Judge, 2013). When task-oriented leadership is administered, management communication styles somewhat expresses directive behaviours, which emphasises getting the task done at stipulated deadlines and at all cost, whereas when relationship oriented leadership style is deployed, management communication reflect supportive behaviours which emphasises building positive work relationship with subordinates and expresses morale boosters for effective job delivery. Thus, given this inseparable ties between them, we say that communication and leadership are inextricably linked.

In school organisation, the mix of communication and leadership styles play a significant role in creating a shared culture of learning whereby superior managers and subordinate employees continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to have a full grasp of reality (Getsmarter, 2020). Given the dynamic nature of learning organisations, the style of communication and leadership ought not be rigid and static but flexible and dynamic, strategically oriented to meet the emerging needs (physiological and psychological) and other challenges of employees, in changing situations or circumstances of the work environment. This therefore, creates a need for an integrative theory of communication and leadership which provides an a la carte of styles by which managers of schools could navigate through easily, to meet, at any time and circumstances, the needs of their team of employees with individual differences, in maturity (i.e. readiness or development) levels of job performance, so as to promote effective employee performance management.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted the environment of businesses in Nigeria in 2020, adversely affected over 87% of business organisations due to lockdowns, social distancing and many such policies enacted by government to mitigate the spread and death casualties of the dreaded disease (Akinpelu, 2020). In the wake of this crisis, severe job losses, loss of potential profits, depletion of reserved profits, low productivity due to technology-gap, low commitment and high staff turnover on account of low incentives and other welfare considerations, as well as downsizing of many schools became evident.

Nevertheless, with the discovery and introduction of COVID-19 vaccine, which helped to stem the tide to the scourge, coupled with other interventions of government in providing loans and palliatives to SMEs, the hopes of many fears were allayed, and opportunities for business operations were restored. However, in the Nigeria's Post-COVID-19 era, laden with hyper-inflation, the unfavourable working conditions of employees have continued to persist in most private and public schools, while managers of these organisations have continued to pay lip service to this plight. Thus, the insensitivities of this magnitude, have raised deep concern, especially to workers, Labour unions and other non-governmental agencies, as it has led to low employee morale, low job performance and at the extreme, incessant industrial actions too, which are all symptomatic of a weak communication and leadership styles of management, that play out both in the field of service and on the negotiation table. Moreover, this backdrop may also have been orchestrated by a lack of understanding by these managers of the need to create a shared culture of collaborative learning in the work environment that would prioritise the growth needs of their employees in all ramifications and also enhance leadership competences for effective employee performance management. In the light of the foregoing, this paper seeks to advance knowledge and deepen understanding of communication and leadership styles that motivate and enhance effective employee performance in organisations.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the communications styles that enhance effective employee motivation and performance management.
2. Determine the leadership styles that enhance effective employee motivation and performance management.
3. Discuss how best these communication and leadership styles could be integrated to bolster employee morale for effective job performance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Situational Leadership Theory (SLT)**

The situational leadership theory was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard and first introduced in 1969 as 'life cycle theory of leadership.' During the mid-1970s, life cycle theory of leadership was renamed "situational leadership theory" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

Situational leadership theory is a leadership model which rests on the assumption that there is no single best style of leadership. According to this model, most effective

style of leadership varies with changing situation or circumstances surrounding the work environment and the task, job or functions that need to be accomplished. That effective leadership is task-relevant and the most successful leaders are those who adapt their leadership style to the maturity levels (willingness and ability) of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence. Heysey and Blanchard thus, came up with four leadership styles which they matched with four employees' maturity levels as follows:

**Table 1:** Situational Leadership styles and their corresponding follower maturity levels

<b>Leadership styles</b>	<b>Follower Maturity Level Matched</b>
<b>S1</b> = Telling (Directing)- this leadership style places high emphasis on directive behaviour and a low emphasis on supportive behaviour.	<b>M1</b> = employees who have low willingness and lack ability (competences) due to lack of experience, and hence requires close supervision and specific guidance on what needs to be done and how.
<b>S2</b> = Selling (Coaching)- this leadership style places emphasis on high directive and high supportive behavior	<b>M2</b> = employees who are willing to do the task but lack the skills or experience to do it successfully.
<b>S3</b> = Participating (Supporting)- this style of leadership places emphasis on high supportive behaviours, but low directive behaviours	<b>M3</b> = employees who have low willingness due to lack of self-confidence but have the ability (competences) required of the job.
<b>S4</b> = Delegating- this style of leadership places emphasis on low supportive and low directive behaviour.	<b>M4</b> = employees who have high ability to do the task and also have high willingness to take responsibility for job task, with or without supervision.

A leader's directive behaviour thus, refers to the extent to which a leader puts emphasis on the concern to get the job done by being task-focused, while a leader's supportive behaviour refers to the extent to which a leader puts emphasis on building and maintain good relationship with subordinates by paying attention to the security, well-being and personal needs of the employees (Bruin, 2020).

The situational leadership theory is relevant to this research area because it offers basic assumptions regarding a range of alternative leadership styles available to managers of secondary schools and provides the parameters in determining what styles to be adopted in varied situations, which when implemented, help to boost employee morale and improve performance outcomes in the secondary schools.

### **Roberts Norton's Theory of Communication Styles**

Roberts Norton, in his 1978 publication titled "Foundation of a communicator style construct," developed what has been described as the Communicator Style Measure (CSM), consisting of nine independent variables used to describe a communicator style. According to Norton, a communicator style refers to "the way one verbally and para-verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered and understood" (Rubin *et al* 1994, p.134).

These styles, as described by Norton comprises: **Dominant**- reflects a tendency to take charge in social situations. **Dramatic**- refers to communicating in a way that highlights or understates content. **Contentious** represents communicating in a negative combative fashion. **Animated**- refers to 'physical, nonverbal cues'. **Impression Leaving**- defines a person who manifests a visible or memorable style of communicating. **Relaxed**- refers to an absence of tension or anxiety. **Attentive**- involves making sure others know that they are being listened to. **Open**- is being conversational, expansive, affable, convivial, gregarious, unreserved, unsecretive, somewhat frank, possibly outspoken, definitely extroverted and obviously approachable. **Friendly**- 'ranges in meaning from being unhostile to deep intimacy (Rubin *et al* 1994, p.134).

These styles by description thus, provide a continuum of *directive communication* (Dominant, Contentious) which describes the use of aggressive communication, through *non-directive communication* (Attentive and Friendly) which describes inclusive communication, while such *communicative activity* as (dramatic, Animated and relaxed) provide techniques for managing tensions so as to enhance clarity and understanding of message so communicated. The open style demonstrates the extent to which assertive communication are encouraged and thus, creates a balance at the mid-range between directive and non-directive communication. The impression leaving style demonstrates the overall outcome or effect, the dynamics of communication episode has on the target, which translates from cognitive to behavioural change.

This theory is relevant to this study because it offers constructs which help to define the alternative communication approaches, by which the goals of leadership could be expressively manifested (in both task and relationship behaviours), to effect the desired employee motivation and performance management.

### **Methodology**

The researchers adopted the E-Library research method, involving the use of internet to outsource relevant secondary data from search engines of selected research databases. The search strategy is summarised thus: *Database search engines used*: Google Scholar and Research Gate. *The search Phrases/ Keywords*: Communication Styles, Leadership styles, employee motivation, employee performance, employee performance management, High school (OR) secondary schools (N/B: the use of Boolean logic: AND/OR was necessitated by the need to expand the scope of research, to better identify articles that addresses the research question. *Search Limits (inclusion/exclusion criteria)*: Content type: Journal Articles only, publication date: 2019 to date, Discipline: Education only, open access. *Selection criteria*: for each of communication styles and leadership styles, 10 articles were purposively selected out of the first 50 articles, in all therefore, 20 articles were purposively chosen on the basis of 'most relevant' to the topic.

### **Results and Discussion**

Out of the 20 published articles obtained for the study, 13 were considered because they offered key styles variables needed to address the study objectives, while 7 others were discarded. From the articles reviewed a total of 16 communication styles and 13 leadership styles were identified, but those considered synonymous were collapsed and they are discussed below.

**Research Objective 1: Examine the Communications Styles that enhance Effective Employee Motivation and Performance Management**

The following communication styles were identified and they are examined as follows:

**Open Communication Style:** This style represents an aspect of organisational communication processes through which democratic procedures can be attained by managers. It is thus characterised by an open system of information sharing, two-way communicative process, in which all members of organisation are encouraged to freely and without fear of mistreatment, express their thoughts in respectable and constructive manners, on issues of concern that affect the wellbeing of members of the organisation, both individually and collectively.

Mohammed & Abidin (2021) in their study found that principals' open communication styles yielded the most significant positive relationship with the school culture and this is because the style not only create an environment of respect, but also promote efficient feedback mechanism, collaboration, staff recognition and friendliness in ways that allow members to significantly contribute to effective administration of schools and the achievement of corporate goals. Additionally, Alabi (2022) opines that the open style is people-centered and ensures that the opinions, wishes and aspirations of staff are considered during decision making. Thus, open style of communication increases staff morale and boost employee performance. Ndubueze & Oputa (2021) condensed the aspects of leadership communication considered open to include openness to constructive criticism, listening to issues about staff concerns, making consultation before decision making and providing unrestricted access to information sharing and free interaction. Generally, therefore, for open styles to stimulate employee performance, communication practices must reflect high degree of honesty, empathy, team spirit and interactional justice in converging expressive thoughts.

**Inclusive Communication Style:** This style is particularly relevant in a culturally diverse organisation, when there is a need to give everyone an equal chance in contributing to the attainment of corporate objective. Inclusive communication is concerned with the unbiased nature of communication which provides every organisational member with fair and equal treatment and without prejudice, in the policy formulation, communication and implementation of established standard criteria of employment, performance appraisal, promotion, reward or punishment to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity and other cultural variables.

This style, according to Mohammed & Abidin (2021), creates an environment of respect for the rights and dignity of all members of the organisation, and this enhances their genuine commitment leading to improved job performance. Inclusive communication also reduces the tendency for conflict to arise and promotes group cohesiveness, since everybody understand that they are being carried along and treated fairly, regardless of their differences in cultural attributes. Thus, for effective management of schools, Alabi (2022) recommended a need for connectivity between

principal and staff which will not only promote effective teaching and learning, but also ensure good relationship- a gap which inclusive communication stands to bridge.

**Assertive Communication Style:** This style of communication promotes cooperation in negotiating meaning, as interlocutors are confident in expressing their intentions or demands in clear terms without compromising the rights of others (right to self-dignity, fair-hearing, freedom of expression) with whom they communicate and without having to passively accept wrong in such an honest, emotionally intelligent conversation.

A school manager who engages in assertive communication is an active listener, super-willing to flip sides, have a high esteem, is not easily provoked or manipulative, is perceptive and responsive to the emotional needs of others, and speaks in a respectful and positive tone (Alabi, 2022; Mohammed & Abidin, 2021). This style is crucial in mitigating organisational conflict, as it facilitates mutual considerations, mutual understanding of performance expectations and promotes cooperation necessary for effective employee coordination and enhanced job performance.

**Aggressive Communication Styles:** This style of communication is characterised by high level directive communicative behaviour in a seemingly hostile fashion, in which expressions are made strongly with high tone of voice in somewhat threatening, coercive and verbally abusive manner. This style of communication has a bearing with autocratic leadership since it allows them to exert their sense of superiority and domineering influence over subordinates. The style gives no room for employee consideration, as the intent is to superimpose the will of a superior over the will of others, even when such will negate the will and wishes of vulnerable others.

School managers that use aggressive communication style create a win-lose situation and use intimidation, power and control to get their own needs met, often at the expense of others. They are usually poor listeners and tend to monopolise discussions. They are fault finders, try to dominate others, use humiliation to control others, criticises, blames or attacks others, has low frustration tolerance, speak in a loud, demanding and overbearing voice, act threateningly and rudely (Alabi, 2022, p.117). The implications of these are that they discourage employees' commitment, innovativeness and organisational citizenship behaviour. Moreover, the style may breed a hostile work environment that creates job dissatisfaction leading to high employee turnover.

**Analytical Communication Styles:** This style is concerned with high degree of thoroughness and accuracy in logical reasoning, critical thinking, careful planning, decision making and communicating on the basis of in-depth analysis of fact. Managers who adopt analytical communication styles are usually systematic, organised, cautious and detailed-oriented, quick to think, but slow to act. They prefer solid documentation and are focused on process, tasks and doing things the right way (Viloria, 2021, p.171). On the negative, analytical leaders can be critical, picky, perfectionist and stubborn, as well as indecisive. Their tendency under stress is to avoid others. Given its salient features, this communication style mirrors a transactional leadership.

**Drivers (or Dominant) Communication Styles:** This style is concerned with achievement-oriented leadership. Managers who adopt driver style are often high-achievers who, according to Viloría (2021), are not only hard-working, ambitious, decisive and competitive, but also give no room for failures. They are good at delegating and for this reason they prefer to work with highly competent workforce. The drawbacks of this style are that they can be tough, pushy, demanding, and exclude others from decision making. Under stress, driver communicators become autocratic (or aggressive) and order others around.

**Expressive Communication Styles:** This style may be viewed as synonymous with assertive communication, as the communicators of this style are enthusiastic, optimistic, open-minded, talkative (or outspoken), dramatic and ever willing to share information/ideas and vision with others, which enhances cooperation and team spirit. This style can be adapted to democratic leadership style.

**Amiable Communication Styles:** This style is synonymous with inclusive communication and focuses on building friendship and collaboration with team members using words that appeal to emotions (i.e. empathy). This style can be adapted to supportive (participative leadership styles).

## **Research Objective 2: Determine the Leadership Styles that enhance Effective Employee Motivation and Performance Management**

The following leadership styles were identified and they are discussed as follows:

**Ethical Leadership:** This style of leadership is concerned with a leader's inclination to act or express accepted moral norms of behaviour and to influence others to act responsibly in like manners, as to promote a welcomed social environment that respects the rights and dignity of members of the organisation. According to Astuti *et al* (2020), an ethical leader "has a very high standard of moral and ethical behaviour and can be relied on to do the right thing" which creates a sense of admiration, respect and at the same time, engender follower trust in the leadership (p.112). The principles of truth, integrity, transparency and accountability, among other ethical conditions are key values which endear a leader-manager and also stimulate an enduring loyalty of subordinate employees, causing them to be willing to readily adjust to needs for behavioural changes that will improve job performance. An ethically oriented leader-manager will, according to Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes & Salvador (2009), strive to create a positive ethical climate by: becoming a visible role model for appropriate behaviour; communicating without ambiguity, ethical expectations that others must follow; providing necessary ethical trainings to reinforce acceptable standards of conduct; visibly rewarding ethical practices and conspicuously punishing unethical ones and providing protective mechanisms to ensure that employees report unethical behaviours without fear of any sort of mistreatment. Consequently, deviant behaviours will be reduced and maximum cooperation enhanced, for effective employee motivation and performance.



**Charismatic Leadership Style:** For Astuti *et al* (2020), the charisma possessed by a school principal is an important component of the leadership style. This style of leadership is brought to bear when a leader-manager possesses extraordinary leadership abilities. These abilities are manifested through certain observable behavioural attributes which, according to Conger & Kanungo (1998), include having foresighted vision, articulate and effective in communication for mutual understanding, high willingness to take personal risk, perceptive and responsive to followers need, highly innovative and expresses unconventional behaviours considered novel (cited in Robbins & Judge 2013, p.380).

Given these attributes, it becomes valid to throw weight behind the view of Astuti *et al* (2020) that teachers tend to have confidence or trust in, respect for and demonstrate loyalty under the control of a charismatic leader. Moreover, a charismatic leader is able to instill a sense of pride and bolster followers' self-esteem and perseverance in fulfilling high performance expectation, through emotive words and actions that encourages them (i.e. the teachers) to think and act out of the box. In crisis situation, a charismatic leader is best known for initiating drastic measures and exhibiting rare courage without retreat in the face of challenges that make others fret.

**Inspirational Leadership Style:** This style is necessitated when there is an absolute need to create a culture that educates, motivates, inspires and support followers within an organisation. For Astuti *et al* (2020), what makes inspirational leaders successful is their ability to motivate subordinates (i.e. teachers) by blending emotional intelligence with spiritual intelligence in order to create a shared vision and set of agreed upon ethical values, enhance team spirit through the uses of symbols and emotional appeal, and promote creativity and innovation through intellectual stimulation, all of which creates a sense of belief and purpose within the organisation.

In addition, inspirational leaders are authentic in words and actions, and they treat subordinates with dignity and respect, they are approachable and inclusive and promote justice within the organisation, which makes everyone feel valued and willing to go an extra mile to fulfill expectations in their job performance. It would be noted that inspirational leadership is an integral aspect of transformational leadership and in some ways; its features are made visible in other forms of leadership styles.

**Democratic (also known as Participative) Leadership Style:** This style is essential when there is a need to promote employee engagement and enhance job satisfaction. This style of leadership creates an open system of information sharing, consultation and efficient feedback mechanism between leader-managers and subordinate employees. In the school setting, democratic style of leadership not only provide the necessary guidance for effective policy formulation and effective decision making, but also promote maximum staff co-operation in their implementation and in the performance of job duties.

Moreover, the findings of Oyugi & Gogo (2020); Igunnu (2020) and Yalcinkaya (2021), established that democratic leadership styles positively affect students' academic

achievement and general school performance because they motivate teachers to work with principals to achieve school objectives, allow teachers to take initiatives so as to improve student academic achievement. Democratic leadership supports and encourages team work, good cooperation, good remuneration of all staff, motivation of staff and students (Oyugi & Gogo, 2020, p.25). But the success or otherwise of a democratic style is dependent on the skill, forthrightness and managerial efficiency of the manager in harmonising dissenting views and interests, especially in a complex, culturally diverse organisation.

**Autocratic (also known as Directive) Leadership Style:** This style of leadership assumes a direct opposite of democratic styles as it prioritises the use and abuse (i.e. coercive or arbitrary use) of positional authority to enforce absolute obedience and strict compliance to rules and policies, and without regard for others opinion, autocratic leaders rely on their personal initiative in decision making. This style is characterised by close supervision and control of the performance of followers and especially those considered to be neophytes or inexperienced in skills and other capabilities required of the job. Thus the autocratic leader is known to be directive and task oriented. For Saleem *et al* (2020), the directive leadership style is favourable in a high-pressure work environment where followers need to achieve challenging targets and goals.

Saleem *et al* (2020) impresses that directive leaders guide their followers (i.e. teachers) on what to do and how to do it by giving explicit explanations and this is especially true with regards to teaching planning, classroom organisation, monitoring and evaluation, classroom atmosphere and discipline. Similarly, Oyugi & Gogo (2020) concluded that a strong, positive and significant relationship exist between autocratic leadership and student's academic performance since it ensures a system of discipline, efficient time management, high respect for constituted authority and conformity to standards which enhances academic success (p.26).

But this notwithstanding, Oyugi & Gogo (2020) noted that principals of schools investigated were more autocratic in decision making, and thus self-opinionated which did not go down well with staff development and management, leading to high levels of absenteeism and staff turnovers, which corroborates the views of Igunnu (2020) that autocratic leadership discourages staff motivation and efficiency in schools. Autocratic leaders will thus be successful in promoting effective employee performance, when they understand how not to blow things out of proportion using aggressive approaches that denigrates the dignity of labour, and lowers employee morale, but rather with moderation, apply corrective measures that reproves deviant behaviours, while maintaining fair play in the administration of justice in the workplace.

**Laissez Faire Leadership Style/ Full Freedom Styles:** This style of leadership encourages full autonomy of subordinates both in decision making and performance of job duties without any interference from top management; thus, creating an opportunity for managers to shift unto subordinate employees, the full responsibility and

accountability for the success or failures of corporate objectives while they play only a passive role.

Yalcinkaya *et al* (2021) in their study, found that laissez faire leadership style were more intrinsically rewarding for employees, when compared with democratic and autocratic styles. This is because the style allows for employees' training and support for development, freedom to tap into their creative sense of self and implement innovative ideas in their job performance. Beside these, the style also allows for freedom to make quick decisions whenever the need arose and helps employees to stimulate their self-confidence by turning their mistakes into learning opportunities rather than for reprimand. But then, one would understand that laissez faire leadership works best when members of staff are highly competent and know their onions. This informs the reason why supervision and control is minimised since everyone knows what to do, at what time and how best to do them in order to achieve the best result which everyone craves for. Thus, all what the leader needs do is to clarify roles and provide all resources required for the job.

On the contrary, Oyugi & Gogo (2020) contended that Laissez-faire leadership style is not suited for use by principals because complete delegation without follow-up mechanisms creates performance problems, much so as freedom without responsibility is disastrous, and this in turn impact negatively on students' academic performance. Corroborating this view, Igunnu (2020) found that laissez faire reduces seriousness, lowers employee motivation and ultimately creates what we may describe as 'a system of organised confusion' since there is no clear cut yardstick for performance evaluation and management. Therefore, Oyugo & Gogo (2020) and Igunnu (2020) concluded that the use of Laissez faire leadership style be sidestepped.

**Transactional Leadership Style:** This style, more like an autocratic style, focuses on the use by managers, of directive behaviours (such as 'telling', close supervision, rewards and corrective measures) to influence the attainment of performance objectives. This style assumes a transactional approach (give and take exchange process) in rewarding and/or punishing subordinates for job done on the basis of compliance with or deviations from established performance standards. Although, the extent to which rewards/punishments are commensurate with job performance outcomes on the one hand and the extent to which they influence effective employee job motivation and performance on the other hand, depend on the managers' constructive use of positional authority in enforcing compliance to rules, close monitoring and the degree of fairness in administering the various dimensions of justice within the organisation: Procedural, distributive/retributive and interactional justice.

The objective of the transactional leader, according to Nwile *et al* (2022), is to ensure that the path to goal attainment is clearly understood by the internal actors, to remove potential barriers within the system and to motivate the actors to achieve the predetermined goals. Thus, the 'give and take' leadership style is more concerned with following established routines and procedures in an efficient manner than with making any transformational changes to an organisation. Nwile *et al* (2022) further stressed a

major drawback to the transactional leadership style as lacking the drive for employee enthusiasm and commitment to the task objective, since personal growth needs are least considered except in fulfilment of the managers' desires. Consequently, transactional leadership style does not encourage organisational citizenship behaviour, beyond the official requirements of employees' job performance.

**Transformational Leadership Styles:** This style of leadership combines a range of strategies which transcend those of transactional style and aimed at inspiring subordinates to be creative, cooperative, and selfless in their dedication to job performance in the most professional ways, leading to higher organisational effectiveness in achieving its set goals.

To be able to achieve effective employee job performance, transformational leaders need to command idealised influence (be charismatic), provide inspirational motivation (communicate high expectations and use emotional appeals to drive favourable action), engineer intellectual stimulation (provide training opportunities that improve problem-solving skills and technical competence.) and create supportive environment for individualised consideration (perceive and respond to emotional needs and other physiological and psychological elements of employees' individual differences) (Robbins & Judge, 2013; Nwile *et al* 2022).

In their study, Nwile *et al* (2022) recommended that principals and other categories of staff should adopt a transformational leadership style to broaden followers' mindsets through training and skills development in order to be able to solve problems of different magnitudes which ultimately will gravitate towards effective management of the school system.

**Achievement-oriented Leadership:** This style is concerned with leader-managers' use of challenging goals and their strong emphasis on achieving them to motivate subordinates. To ensure effective performance, achievement-oriented leaders provide subordinates with high performance standards and also encourage them to strive for personal growth and continuous performance improvement, by means of trainings and development programmes (Saleem *et al*, 2020).

It would be noted that this style works well with employees whose readiness level is high enough to take on tasks with challenging goals. But if the goals are too challenging to be realistic, it might lower employee morale as frustration and burn-out becomes inevitable. Moreover, the degree of clarity and the extent to which the goals set are rewarding may also be a contributing factor to the success or otherwise of this leadership style.

**Supportive Leadership Style:** This style in some ways, share most, if not all aspects of democratic cum participative leadership style since it encourages open dialogue and feedback between leader-managers and subordinates and creates an enabling environment that bolsters employee morale and reinforces positive behaviours. For Saleem *et al* (2020), supportive leaders promote job integrity, feelings of dignity and offer the

necessary guidance to meet ambitious goals and because they are empathetic, they gain respect and loyalty of subordinates.

**Research Objective 3: Discuss how best these communication and leadership styles could be integrated to bolster employee morale for effective job performance**

As shown by the various styles reviewed above, managers have at their disposal, a plethora of communication and leadership styles by which they can effectively motivate employees and improve their performance. However, in determining the best fit of combinations, managers must firstly, consider the goals to be achieved (which may cut across expectations that require a need for changes in any of employees' current task, adaptive and contextual performance levels), that will guarantee the desired improvement in their motivation and effectiveness in job performance. Secondly, managers are to evaluate employees' current maturity or readiness levels (in terms of their willingness (commitment) and ability (competence).

Having understood the gaps to be bridged between expectations and reality, then thirdly, they (managers) are to choose a combination of leadership styles, suitable to drive the readiness level of employees to the expected optimum. A combination of leadership styles is necessitated by the fact that there exist individual differences among employees, which calls for an accurate and objective (devoid of cultural, emotional and other forms of bias) classifications of employees into different groups based on their readiness levels. Thus, at different levels of readiness for each group of employees so classified, different leadership styles are then adapted for optimal effectiveness in performance management. Fourthly, managers are to select appropriate communication styles that not only can best convey the mannerism of the leadership style, but also has the conduit richness, sufficient enough to drive leadership goals and performance expectations to reality.

Moreover, a key element in blending the duo is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to a leader's ability to perceive emotion in the self and others, understand the meaning of these emotions and regulate emotions of self [*as well as influence the emotions of others*] (Robbins & Judge 2013, p.112). This is because emotions determine the state of physiological and psychological wellbeing of employees and influence in a great deal, the degree of responsiveness of employees' behaviour to changes in performance expectations placed on them by their leaders. Negative emotions will demotivate workers even more than positive emotions can motivate them. Thus, emotional intelligence (and in some cases spiritual intelligence) will help managers to respond to the emotional needs of employees by aptly selecting the right combination of styles that will strike the right balance between the extremes of high directive (i.e. task-oriented) behaviour and high supportive (i.e. relationship-oriented) behaviour, which are autocratic and democratic in nature respectively.

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing submissions, it is concluded that communication and leadership when aptly integrated, play important role in the motivation and performance management of

employees. The success or otherwise of a team of managers, rest solely on the extent of their intelligence, efficacy and flexibility in administering communication and leadership styles that are suitable to situational demands in the work place. Furthermore, this paper has shown that individually and collectively, the styles of communication and leadership are meant to complement one another and not be substituted one for another. This is because each one stands to bless the mess of the others' inadequacies. Thus, in this post COVID-19 era, bedeviled by economic challenges that calls for stern economic recovery, school managers are urged to brace up in their acquaintance with adept knowledge of effective communication and leadership skills and applicable best practices in administering authentic leadership styles that are transformational and which would help in liberalising access to employee developmental opportunities towards harnessing the best of human resource potentials for greater employee job performance and its associated outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

For effective employee motivation and performance management in our secondary institutions of learning, the following are thus recommended:

1. Leader-managers of schools should prioritise effective communication that is open, inclusive and honest in order to promote co-operation, group cohesiveness and mutual understanding of shared vision among members of the schools' organisation.
2. Ethical values should be the guiding principles in dispensing effective leadership styles.
3. Regular staff trainings and development programmes be encouraged to bolster leadership and followership skills and competences required in their respective job performance.
4. Employee concerns for personal growth and development should be given top priority and requisite support by leader-managers, as it would enhance their motivation and drive for efficiency. A key element for identifying employee growth and development needs would be emotional intelligence, supportive leadership qualities.

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