

**LEADERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP STYLES AS SOCIAL WORK
TECHNIQUES IN SOCIAL WORK ADMINISTRATION AND
INTERVENTION IN THE SOCIAL AGENCIES' SERVICES FOR NIGERIAN
FAMILIES: BEST PRACTICES IN FOCUS**

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Abstract

In any given social agency where social work practice and administration is carried out, there must be an administrative leader. One who takes care of others and work situation. A leader is a person with power over others who exercises the power for the purpose of influencing their behaviour. All leaders have influences. They provide directions and they assist in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. The social worker who heads any social agency is in the area of social work administration and a leader. He/she is formally there to realize the objectives and aspirations of the social agency and social work practice. Leaders characteristically, inspire others to achieve the given objectives and roles. The important of social workers in administrations and the interventions for quality services to the families in social agencies cannot be over emphasized. Thus, this work is based on leadership and leadership styles as social work techniques and to suggest the best practices in social work administrations and interventions in social agencies for social work services to the families in Nigeria.

Key words: Leadership; Leadership style; Social work administration; Intervention; Family; Social agency.

Introduction

According to Asogwa (2011) administration is unique in the sense that the administrator would need to have a

broad knowledge of organization's activities and administrative structures. In different social agencies in Nigeria over time, successful social workers in social work administration as leaders have displaced quite varieties of leadership and leadership styles. Leadership is the art of coordinating and motivating individuals and groups to achieve the desired ends. Relation within social agency depends principally on leadership of the social worker who is in the area of social work administration. Leadership involves a matter of personality vested with authority and roles. Leadership activities are directed to getting affective work from the subordinates. The unique ability of the leader is a social talent – that of getting the best efforts of the organization's members.

There are many definitions of leadership depending on the purpose and professional predilection of the definer. Leadership is said to be a social influencing process for the attainment of goals. Umez (2009) defined leader as one who initiates changes to accomplish the goal of an organization. He conceptualized leadership as the influencing of actions, behaviours, beliefs, and feelings of one actor in a social system by another actor with the willing co-operation of the actor being influenced. Aroh (2011) conceives of leadership as exercise of authority that is supported by group norms and accepted by members. Similarly, Whawo (2019) sees leadership as a complex set of relationship of leader and followers marked by three attributes: reciprocity, a specific setting and influence. McCauley (1998) emphasized that leadership in social work administration means, supplying the energy, the signals, and the examples needed to sustain

cooperative activity in a programme in which many individuals with formally assigned roles act to achieve a particular objective or a set of objectives. Maxwell (2016) defined leadership as a process of focusing the attention and releasing the energies of the people in a desired direction, especially provision of social work services to the family members in social agencies.

Thus, a social worker in social work administration as a leader is the most influential person in the social agency who provides direction, coordinates, guides and controls the subordinates' activities and ensures that the agency's objectives and aspirations of providing social work services to the families are all attained. The functions and interventions of leadership pervade all the agency activities. Empirical research findings indicate that the situation in which a leader operates shape his leadership. A good leader is very conscious of his position. He can explain a situation. To lead is to direct or guide. It is to show the led what to do and how to do it. To be able to do these well, one has to possess certain qualities that will enable him lead well. Not every person can lead and not all leaders are good leaders.

A competent social worker leadership in social work administration is an important ingredient for successful operation of the social agency in provision of the needed social work services to the families. A bungling leader can wreck morale and destroy efficiency. The most appropriate type of leadership and the traits of the successful leader in social work administration is dependent to some extent upon the particular situation in the social agency.

Theories of Leadership

According to Ichak (2020) for decades, leadership theories have been the source of

numerous studies. In reality as well as in practice, many have tried to define what allows authentic leaders to stand apart from the mass. Hence, there are as many theories on leadership as there are philosophers, researchers, and professors that have studied and ultimately published their leadership theories. The leadership theories are commonly categorized by which aspect is believed to define the leader the most. The most widespread theories are: Great man theory, Trait theory, Behavioural theory, Contingency theory, Transactional theory, and Transformation theory.

Great Man Theory: The Great Man Theory evolved around the mid nineteenth century. Just as the name suggests, only a man could have the characteristic(s) of a great leader. The Great Man Theory assumes that the traits of leadership are intrinsic. That simply means that great leaders are born. There are not made. This theory sees great leaders as those who are destined by birth to become a leader. Furthermore, the belief was that great leaders will rise when confronted with the appropriate situation.

Trait Theory: The trait leadership theory believes that people are either born or are made with certain qualities that will make them excel in leadership roles. That is, certain qualities such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and other values puts anyone in the shoes of a great leader. The trait theory of leadership focused on analysing mental, physical and social characteristic in order to gain more understanding of what is the or the combination of characteristics that are common among leaders. Many studies have analysed their traits among existing leaders in the hope of uncovering those responsible for one's leadership abilities. In vain, the only characteristics that were identified among these individuals were those that

were slightly taller and slightly more intelligent.

Behavioural Theory: In reaction to the trait leadership theory, the behavioural theories are offering a new perspective, one that focuses on the behaviour of the leaders as opposed to their mental, physical, or social characteristics. The behavioural theories first divided leaders in two categories. Those that were concerned with the tasks and those concerned with the people.

Contingency Theory: The contingency leadership theory argues that there is no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on certain situations, which signifies that there are certain people who perform at the maximum level in certain places but at minimal performance when taken out of their element. It is generally accepted within the contingency theory that leaders are more likely to express their leadership when they feel that their followers will be responsive.

Transaction Leadership Theory: Transactional theory also known as exchange theory of leadership is characterized by a transaction made between the leader and the followers. In fact, the theory values a positive and mutually beneficial relationship. For the transactional theory to be effective and as a result have motivational value, the leader must find a means to align to adequately reward or punish his follower for performing leaders assigned task. In other word, transactional leaders are most efficient when they develop a mutual reinforcing environment for which the individual and organizational goals are in sync. The transactional theorists state that humans in general are seeking to maximize pleasurable experiences. Thus, we are more

likely to associate ourselves with individuals that add to our strengths.

Transformational Leadership Theory: The essence of transformational theory is that leaders transform their followers through their inspirational nature and charismatic personalities. Rules and regulations are flexible, guided by group norms. These attributes provide a sense of belonging for the followers as they can easily identify with the leader and its purpose.

Examination of qualities that are necessary for good and successful leadership in social work administration and intervention in the social agencies' services for the families in Nigeria

According to Zenger and Folkman (2020) these are qualities that cannot come to a person by birth like a good voice or reasonable height. They are qualities that only come to a person in the course of life experience, learning, practice and self-discipline. Some of these qualities are:

- a. Knowledge: this involves knowledge of the job and of persons and of problems. A social worker in administration who is not good master of his job is one who cannot command the respect of those he leads in the social agency. It is when he is armed with a sound knowledge of his job, technically and administratively, that his decisions and judgements can be trusted by his subordinates. Knowledge of persons enables him to get along well with his colleagues and know how to deal with his subordinates in the social agency.
- b. Foresight: a good social worker in administration in social agency

- should be a person of foresight. He should be able to anticipate events, make reasonable forecasts and provide for or against them. Foresight also implies ability to judge in advance the consequence of decisions and actions taken or to be taken in the social agency.
- c. **Courage:** social worker in administration in the social agency should have enough courage to tell the truth in matters of suitability, efficiency or character about his subordinates as well as to praise or admonish where necessary.
- d. **Self-discipline:** it is in social work administration perhaps more than in anything else that example is always better than precept. An undisciplined social worker in administration cannot expect to have discipline followers. A social worker who works hard as a leader will have followers who work hard.
- e. **Firmness:** a social worker in administration in social agency should be firm without being high handed. Once instructions are issued or work assigned, he must be firm in seeing to it that those concerned comply. Failure to comply must follow by punishment except when circumstances clearly exonerate those concerned.
- f. **Fairness:** a social worker in administration in the social agency must be transparently and consistently fair in his dealing with all his subordinates irrespective of persons in the social agency.
- g. **Approachability:** the social worker in social agency administration should not be inaccessible to the subordinates. A good leader should be able to get a direct feeling of trends among the public and his followers in order to supplement whatever indirect information he may have through reports by others.
- h. **Vigour:** a good social worker in social work administration in the social agency should be physically active leader otherwise he will be seen more as a driver than a leader.
- i. **Ability to delegate:** what is not common in Nigerian social agency is ability to delegate authority to the subordinates when such need arises.
- j. **Readiness to accept responsibility:** a social worker in social work administration who is accountable to a higher authority for the performances of those he leads must not if things go wrong pass on the blame to those under him. He should accept personal responsibility for the action of his subordinates.
- k. **Patience and understanding:** the importance of patience and understanding on the part of a social worker in administration in the social agency towards the subordinates cannot be over emphasized. It boosts morale and promote confidence in the social agencies.

Types of leadership styles and the advantages and disadvantages

Leadership may be classified in various ways. According to Nwankwo (1990) one common distinction centres on the element

of authority in the relationship between superior and subordinates. According to McCall (2018) leaders may be Autocratic, Charismatic, Democratic or Laissez Faire. The authority that a social worker in social work administration has over his subordinates in a social agency is based on a legal contract which obliges the subordinates to comply with his orders and directives. How he recognized exercises his authority depicts his leadership style. These styles correspond to the patterns generally as: (a) Autocratic Style (b) Democratic Style (c)laissez-Faire Style and (d) Charismatic Style.

a. Autocratic Leadership Style: The autocratic or authoritarian leadership style can best be described as a one-man rule. This in other words means that in an autocratic administration, it is one man that dictates everything. An autocratic leader has no opportunity for members of his organization to take part in decision making which is dangerous to social work administration in any social agency. Under the autocratic leadership, there is no flow of communication between the leader and the subordinates. This style of leadership is a defensive model and it emanates from fear and from the leader's feeling of insecurity. There is imposition of tasks and methods on the subordinates and nagging and suspicious breeding on the part of the leader. An autocratic leader usually gives greater prominence to organizational demands and little or no attention to idiographic aspects. He will therefore be task oriented, directive and distinct in his relations with his subordinates.

b. Democratic Leadership Style:

This style of control supports all social activities which give strength to the feeling of personal dignity and self-respect among the followers. It permits self-expression, creativity and subordinates' interaction. In social work administration, its emphasis is on both the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the social agency, hence it is person and task oriented, participative, and non-directive. This type of leader is normally and widely considered most desirable form of leadership. Many social work administrators have achieved great success in running their social agencies by adopting democratic management. The central idea in democratic management is getting the workers directly involved in helping to make decisions which affect the works themselves and the services for the clients positively. However, democratic leadership requires a high-quality leader that is not easy to come by. Also, communication is complex and wide spread which could lead to waste of time and energy in decision making.

c. Laissez Faie Leadership Style:

The word, laissez faire, is a French Language. It means let things go. This expression is used in social work administration to describe a leader who allows his subordinates to act the way they like. He cannot control the conduct of his workers under him. The leader seldom has a clear vision of agency goals and develops no policy. In this situation, productivity is generally low and work is sloppy. The leader has no confidence in his leadership ability.

It is not an impressive expression expected of good leader. Although laissez faire leadership may be effective in occasional situations in which the subordinates are capable of a constructive response.

d. Charismatic Leadership Style:

The word, charism refers to the power or ability of someone to inspire the devotion, enthusiasm and support of others. A charismatic is therefore the leader who because of some natural charm or power of personality, is able to inspire in his follower's greater devotion to duty and attainment of organizational goal. In charismatic leader, they emerge naturally and people follow them intuitively. These leaders do not achieve their positions by appointment or by election. They emerge through the social process itself because they command the confidence of the members and they have abilities to get things done. Members of an organization under a charismatic leader usually obey the leader, offer him their maximum cooperation. The leader does not mix freely with his followers because they can discover his weakness. Charismatic is unstable because the whole movement is link to one man, and once he is dead, there is confusion.

The power and authority of a social worker in social work administration and intervention in the social agencies

According to Onyia and Aniche (2008) power is the ability an individual has to compel another to do something against his will despite any resistance. This may not be the best means to good leadership by a social worker in social work administration

in the social agency. Power is derogatory to authority. Power without justice is absolute and absolute power corrupt absolutely.

Leadership authority is an interesting area in social agency. Authority is the right to act or decide. A leader has authority in social agency if he has the right to command and expect obedience from his subordinates. The more power the leader has, the lesser authority he leaves to his subordinates and the lesser power the leader has, the more authority his followers have and thus more group freedom.

No social agency could survive if authority had not been vested in the social worker who is in charge of social work administration as a leader. In fact, any social agency is nothing but a structure of authority relationships. It is the responsibility of those in whom authority is vested to coordinate the activities of the agency in order to accomplish its goals. A degree of authority should be given to the subordinates because they need the authority in order to achieve a given level of services in social agency.

The general leadership positions intervention of social workers in social work administrations and in the social agencies in Nigeria

In the Nigerian Social Agencies, the social workers to whom authorities devolve are of course the paid officials, appointed or elected, permanent or temporary, playing the roles of social work administrators and managers. It is those social work professionals who in their different spheres and at their different levels are expected to give leadership. According to Ekpe and Mamah (1997) the ability to administer and lead the subordinates in the agencies is a skill, an art gained through a lengthy period of training in social work programme.

Akukwe (1988) emphasized that professionals are trained for programmes and also to acquire competence in one specific development field. It is not something those leaders are born with. The skill and art are usually acquired through their experiences in working with the families and learning. The inborn qualities such as eloquence or amiability or even the accidental circumstance of good family background only become relevant when the leader knows how to use them in the course of his work with his subordinates in the social agencies for the families.

According to Whawo (2019) the social workers in the social agencies in Nigeria are faced with the practical problems of selecting leadership styles to be used in dealing with their subordinates in programme formulation and implementation. The social workers in administration usually have some freedom of choice in making their selections and they attempt to utilize the kind of leaderships that will best achieve agencies goals, create good morale and stimulate the subordinate in carrying out functions.

The social workers in social work administration in the social agencies in Nigeria play the major roles in planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating and reporting. The social workers are responsible for day-to-day execution of projects of the agencies. They see that the plans are implemented. Depending on the type of personality of the social worker in the administration, he may adopt any leadership style.

Suggestions on types of leadership and leadership style best useful for social workers in social work administration and intervention in the social agencies for social work services to the families in Nigeria

According to Schein (2021) the best leadership and leadership style to be adopted in social work administration and intervention in the social agencies in Nigeria for social work services to the families are determined by such factors as forces of leader himself, the forces of his followers, and the situation obtainable at the time. In the social work administration in social agencies in Nigeria, the best leadership and style of leadership that are very useful and should be adopted are Transactional Leadership and Democratic Style. Nigeria as a developing nation has her social agencies developing at the same pace. There are diversity of cultural background, different ethnic groups and language variations. All these have resulted in creating different influences in the Nigerians and on the social agencies. The social workers and the families have different ideologies, behaviours, and needs to fulfil. The needs of the agencies occasionally differ from the needs of the people. Transactional Leadership and Democratic style of leadership should be the best to be adopted in the light of all these situations and more by the social workers in social work administration and intervention in the social agencies for the families. The Transactional Leadership and Democratic styles of leaderships support all social activities which give strength to the feeling of personal dignity and self-respect among the subordinates and clients | Nigerians. These permit self-expression, creativity and effective interaction among the social workers in administration and other workers and clients. The democratic leader show greater defence for his staff and clients in social work interventions and provision of services to the people. In transactional leadership and democratic style, the leader plays active roles in stimulating group thinking and developing solutions. He considers his staff and clients

very important in all he does in the social agency.

According to Lauder (2020), in transactional leadership and democratic style, the leader is more concerned in a humanitarian way with people. Also, Johnson (2020) stressed that democratic administration is concerned with getting a job done economically. Democratic leadership is a group phenomenon in which the qualities of leadership are defined by group and family values. These values provide a pattern to which the leader must conform. The transactional leadership and democratic style are seen as best useful and suited for the social workers in social work administration and intervention in social agencies for provision of social work services for the families in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of a social worker in social work administration and intervention in the social agency depends on his ability to know the leadership and leadership style to be adopted that best meet the goals of his social agency and the needs of the clients. It also involves getting the participation of his staff in programme formulation and implementation. A good leader is never afraid of decision making because he combines his own with others to meet the needs of the clients and social agency. The social workers in social work administration in the social agencies as leaders should possess the qualities of good leadership. The objectives of social agencies in Nigeria are most likely to be attained if social workers in social work administration and intervention could adopt transactional leadership and democratic style which combine the efforts of the leaders and those of their subordinates through active participation in provision of social work services to the families.

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