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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING IN THE NIGER STATE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between leadership style and employee well-being in the hotel industry located in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. 75 employees were surveyed using close-ended questionnaires from 15 full service hotels in Minna. Pearson correlation results revealed that a transformational leadership style had a strong positive relationship with employee well-being, while transactional leadership had a strong negative relationship with employee well-being. The main implication of these findings is that hotel owners, policy makers and other stakeholders need to encourage their managers to practice a more transformational style of leadership as this leads to happier employees which leads to happier customers and long-term prosperity for the industry.

Keywords, *Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Employee well-being, Hotel industry.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A popular refrain in business is that “The Customer is King” (So et al., 2018). This implies that a business can only succeed if customers are happy with the product and service provided and become repeat customers whilst inviting friends and family to patronize the business (Zhao et al., 2018). If the customer is king, then the employee is a prince. This is because a business is dependent on each employee to provide the necessary service in such a manner that the customer is satisfied and comes back again and again (Manner 2018). The well-being of an organization’s employees is thus integral to its success in the market place (Huang et al., 2018).

Employee well-being can be defined as “a state of contentment which allows employees to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organization” (O’Donnell, 2014). It is the responsibility of an organization’s leadership to ensure that employees are happy with the working conditions of the organization, and are thus motivated to give their best to help the organization continually achieve its objectives (Prentice et al., 2018). An effective leader creates a conducive environment for his employees which keeps them

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happy and motivated, while an ineffective leader creates a negative environment that adversely affects the employees' well-being and has an eventual negative impact on the organization's performance (Xu & Payne, 2018). There is thus an expected relationship between leadership style and employee well-being which has been empirically proven by several studies (Barling & Frone, 2017; Choi et al., 2017; Rantika, 2017; Inceoglu et al., 2018; Pinck & Sonnetag, 2018).

This established relationship between leadership style and employee well-being is of particular importance in the hospitality industry (Erkultu & Chafra, 2016; Kara et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018). This is because a crucial success factor for the hospitality industry is to ensure that the customer has an enjoyable, once-in-a-life time experience at the hotel or entertainment venue (Bilro et al., 2018; Zhang & Buhalis, 2018). It is completely the responsibility of hotel employees to ensure that every customer has an extremely enjoyable experience at the hotel, if they have any expectation of customers coming back again, as well as helping to spread the word about the quality of the hotel to friends, families and colleagues (Tkaczynski et al., 2018); this responsibility starts from the gateman who first welcomes the guest, to the receptionist who checks in the guest, to the porter who takes the guest's luggage to his or her room, to the kitchen staff who prepares and delivers food to the guest, and to the cleaners who ensure that the guest's hotel room is spic and span. For all these employees to consistently put in the necessary effort to make sure every guest's high expectations are met or exceeded, they have to be extremely motivation and committed to their jobs, and this is hugely dependent on the leadership style practiced by the hotel manager (Breiby & Slatten, 2018; Yudina et al., 2018). This study contributes to the existing hospitality enterprise literature by investigating the relationship between leadership style and employee well-being in hotels located in Minna, Niger State.

In the hospitality industry, leadership can be a crucial tool to ensure that organizations perform well consistently (Kara et al. 2013). This is because a good leader will ensure that a conducive environment is created in the workplace so that employees feel motivated to always give their best performance in ensuring that customers have an excellent experience, which will ensure that they become regulars anytime they visit the state. In other words, leadership style of hotel managers will impact employees' quality of work life, which will determine the long-term sustainability of these hotels (Lapointe & Vandenberghe 2018). Unfortunately, hotel managers in Nigeria seem to have missed the crucial importance of adopting a leadership style that will enhance the quality of work life of their employees (Xu & Payne 2018). Rather, they treat their employees as mere workers that can be easily replaced if they do not do their jobs properly (Lee et al. 2018). Sometimes, these employees are not paid for several months, and are threatened with unemployment if they dare to complain. Others suffer from sexual harassment and verbal abuse. All these negative treatments of employees will have a devastating impact on the quality of work life of these employees, which will have a negative impact on the long-term sustainability of these hotels.

This study hopes to address this problem by assessing the relationship between leadership style of hotel managers and quality of work life of their employees, specifically focusing on selected hotels in Minna, Niger state. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help educate hotel managers in Nigeria on the importance of ensuring that employees have a very high quality of work life if they aspire of enjoying long-term profits from their hotels. The

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aim of this study was to examine the relationship between leadership style and employee quality of work life in the Minna hospitality industry.

This study is significant as it contributes to knowledge, practice and policy. As regards its contribution to knowledge, this study provides a valuable Nigerian perspective on the relationship between leadership style and employee quality of work life. As mentioned in previous sections of this study, most previous studies with the same objective have been conducted in developed countries. This study provides evidence regarding whether the expected relationship exists in a developing country context. As regards its contribution to practice, this study's findings provide important information to Nigerian hotel owners specifically, and Nigerian small businesses generally on the importance of ensuring that managers are trained to adopt leadership styles that will improve employees' quality of work life. Ensuring that employees are highly motivated is an important strategy to ensure customers are satisfied. Satisfied customers are crucial for the sustained viability and growth of any small business, particularly the hotel industry where customer experience is the fundamental service being offered. Finally, this study contributes to policy by enlightening Nigerian policy makers on the need to establish rules that ensure that hotel owners treat their employees properly if tourism is expected to be a major revenue source for the Nigerian economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, a review of findings of prior studies that explored the impact of leadership style on employee well-being in all its manifestations is presented. The section is divided into subsections based on how the scholars conceptualized leadership style. Additionally, the section discusses how the study's variables were conceptualized as well as the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This study has two main variables, leadership style and employee well-being. A review of prior leadership style studies revealed that the vast majority of prior studies conceptualized leadership style as having two distinct types, transformational versus transactional leadership (Alghazo & Al-Anazi, 2016; Al-Shahrani and Baig, 2016; Mekpor & Dartey-Baah, 2017). Transformational leadership can be defined as a motivational leadership type which includes presenting a clear organizational vision and inspiring employees to work towards achieving this vision as one unified team (Skakon et al., 2013; Aydin et al., 2013; Alonderiene & Majauskaite., 2016). On the other hand, Transactional Leadership is a leadership style whereby compliance by follower is promoted by rewards and punishments (Alonderiene & Majauskaite., 2016; Skakon et al., 2013; Aydin et al., 2013). This study submitted to the wisdom of the scholarly majority and also conceptualized leadership style as being either transformational or transactional.

The study's second variable, employee well-being, has been conceptualized as happiness (Wang & Yang, 2016; Wattoo et al., 2018), mental health (Zeng, 2015; Sutherland, 2017), quality of work life (Kara et al., 2013; Guidetti et al., 2018) and life satisfaction (Melloro et al., 2016; Medina-garrido et al., 2017). In determining how to conceptualize employee well-being for this study, a critical assessment was made of each of the four conceptualizations described in the preceding paragraph in order to determine which conceptualization provides the most holistic explanation of employee well-being.

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It was the researchers' contention that quality of work life (QWL) was the most holistic conceptualization of employee well-being which encompassed the qualities described in the other three conceptualizations. QWL which is defined as the favourableness or unfavourableness of an employee's workplace (Guidetti et al. 2018) will determine how happy he or she is at work. It will also have a positive or negative on their mental health as well as their life satisfaction, and finally, it will determine how committed they are to the organization's goals and objectives. In conclusion, employee well-being in this study refers to employees' perceptions as to how favourable or unfavourable the working conditions at their organization are, in other words, their quality of work life.

2.2 Theoretical Issues

The Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) served as the foundation for this study's theoretical framework. TLT was postulated in 1978 by James MacGregor Burns, an American historian and political scientist (Turnnidge & Cote 2018). TLT posits that a transformational manager sincerely attempts to empower his employees and develop them into high involvement individuals and teams by focusing on quality service, cost effectiveness and quality of output of production, to achieve their full potential by creating an environment whereby these followers are encouraged to work for one another in order to achieve lofty goals that will benefit all members of the group and for this reason, the employees' quality of work life will be very high (Price & Weiss, 2013).

On the other hand, the theory posits that a transactional leader is one who is solely concerned about the compliance of his followers to stated objectives (Price & Weiss, 2013). Any follower who obeys instructions is rewarded usually via salary, while any worker who disobeys instructions is punished (Chege & Gakobu, 2017). The transactional leader is also constantly searching for errors in the follower's work to ensure compliance. This creates unease in the follower and tends to affect his or her quality of work life negatively (Eberly et al., 2017).

Figure 1 provides the theoretical frame work of this study based on Transformational Leadership Theory. Based on this theory, the framework explains that employees of hotels in Minna who perceive that their manager adopts a transformational leadership style will have higher quality of work life than employees who perceive that their manager adopts a transactional leadership style. In other words, transformational managers will have a positive impact on the quality of work life of their employees in Minna hotels, while transactional leaders will have a negative impact on their employees.

Leadership style

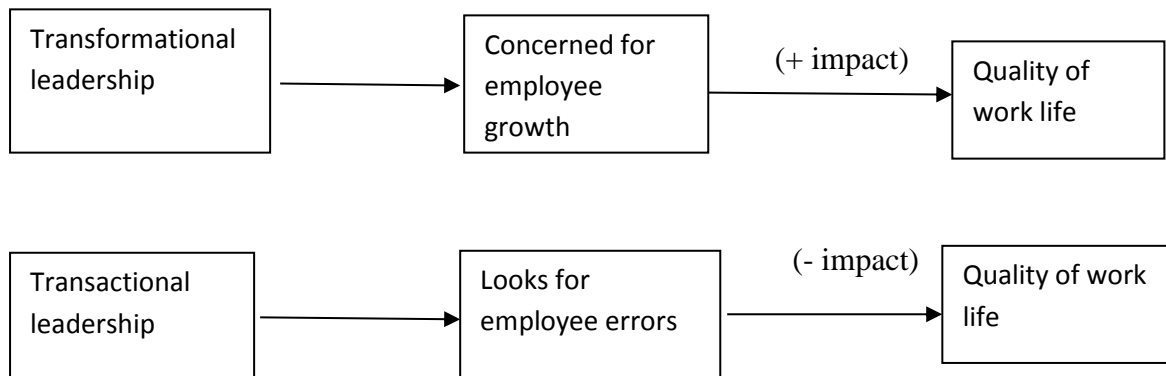


Figure 1, Theoretical framework for this study

2.3 Empirical Evidence

2.3.1 Transformational Leadership and Employee Well being

For this first category of studies, four studies Liu et al. (2010), Gillet et al. (2013), Wang et al. (2014) and Bayram and Dinc (2015) all adopted quantitative approaches to determine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee well-being. Liu et al. (2010) carried out a survey 745 employees in China, while Wang and Rode (2010) surveyed 212 employees of the Miami University in the United States of America. As for Gillet et al. (2013), they surveyed 343 nurses across 47 different haematology, oncology, and haematology/oncology units in France, while Bayram and Dinc (2015) surveyed 120 employees in a Bosnian university. All four studies found that transformational leadership had a positive effect on employee well-being.

2.3.2 Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership and Employee Well-being

Three studies, Kara et al. (2013), Dai et al. (2013) and Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) all adopted quantitative approaches to determine the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employee well-being. Kara et al. (2013) administered 443 questionnaires to employees of 5-star hotels in Turkey and they found that transformational leadership styles were associated with high levels of employee well-being, while transactional leadership styles had no effect on employee well-being. As for Dai et al. (2013), they administered 700 questionnaires to the employees of 8 international hotels in China and their findings indicated that managers that adopted a transformational leadership style created a conducive working environment which improved employee well-being, while managers who adopted a transactional leadership style created a tense working environment which had a negative impact on employee well-being.

Finally, Nanundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) carried out a survey of 1500 employees in India. They found that 70% of the employees surveyed believed that only a transformational leadership style could improve employee well-being, while only 30% believed that a transactional leadership style could also improve employee well-being.

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2.3.3 Autocratic Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership Style and Employee Well-being

Benjamin (2015) was the only study in this third category, and it involved a survey of 284 employees of private and public organisations in the Nigerian state of Ekiti. Findings showed that employees under a democratic leader experienced a higher level of well-being than employees under an autocratic leader. Benjamin (2015) explained that employees under a democratic leader do not experience as much tension in the workplace as those employees under an autocratic leader, and this provides a greater sense of psychological well-being thus improving their feeling of well-being.

2.3.4 Autocratic Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership and Employee Well-being

The sole representative of this fourth category was Adeyemo et al. (2015) who surveyed 250 employees of commercial banks in Ibadan, Nigeria, and found that democratic leadership positively influenced employee well-being, as these leaders paid attention to employees' needs and complaints. This was unlike autocratic leaders and laissez-faire leaders who focused most of their attention on job productivity.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Hypotheses Development

A review of past studies that sought to empirically test the precepts of the transformational leadership theory have shown that the managers that adopt transformational leadership style in hospitality industry have positively impacted on employee well-being (Berkovich, 2016; Meuser et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018), and managers that adopt transactional leadership style have negatively impacted employee well-being in the hospitality industry (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Antonakis & House, 2014; Kark et al., 2018).

These evidences led to the formulation of the following hypotheses for this study,

Hypothesis 1, Transformational leadership style has a positive impact on employees' quality of work life in Minna hotels.

Hypothesis 2, Transactional leadership style has a negative impact on employees' quality of work life in Minna hotels.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design by using closed-ended questionnaires to survey hotel employees working in Minna, Niger State. 45 hotels registered with the Niger State Association of Hotels Minna served as the population of this study. It was discovered that there are 45 registered hotels in Minna, and these served as the population for this study.

According to Ozdemir et al. (2018), a full-service hotel must possess the following amenities, 1) Security, 2) Reception desk, 3) Porter service, 4) Kitchen and 5) Cleaning se. Only 15 of the

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45 hotels possessed these amenities, and these served as the sample hotels for this study. Five key employees providing these important amenities (security guard, receptionist, porter, cook and cleaner) were surveyed from each hotel for a total of 75 respondents.

Self-administered questionnaires were employed to collect data from 75 employees of the 15 hotels in Minna, in order to fulfil the research aim and objectives. The rationale for using the self-administered questionnaires was to give respondents the liberty to answer the questions at their spare time in the comfort of their homes and not to be intimidated by the researcher or any superior. The questionnaire had three sections, The first part focused on the background of the respondents and included information regarding their sex, age, numbers of years served, educational level and marital status. The second part asked employees to rate their manager regarding how much he or she exercised transformational and transactional leadership styles, while the third part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate the extent to which they enjoyed their work environment, which served as a measure of their perceived quality of work life. The study utilized the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' quality of work life and between transaction leadership style and employees' quality of work life. In order to determine to what extent leadership style was able to predict the variance in employees' quality of work life, the Coefficient of Determination was utilized.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and it can be observed that 68.3% (n=48) were male and 35% (n=27) were female. The majority of the respondents (71) had national diplomas, while the rest (4) had HNDs. Most of the respondents (n=58) were between 20-29 years of age, while the remaining (n=17) were between 30-39 years of age. Lastly, the majority of respondents (73) had been with the organization for between 1-10 years, while the remaining two had been with the organization for between 11-20 years.

Table 1, Demographic characteristics of respondent

S/N	Gender	Number	Percentage %
1	Male	48	63.2%
2	Female	27	35.5%
Level of education			
1	Diploma	71	97.3%
2	HND	4	2.7%
Age			
1	20-29	58	77.3%
2	30-39	17	22.7%
Tenure in current organization			
1	1-10	73	97.3%
2	11-20	2	2.7%

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

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4.2 Quality of Work Life of Employees in Selected Hotels in Minna, Niger State

Table 2, Quality of Work Life Level of the Respondents

S/N	Work life	NO	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	QWL	75	0	12	7.11

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

Table 2 presents the measurement of the quality of work life of the 75 employees surveyed. It can be observed that they had a mean score of 7.11 out of maximum of 12, which is about 70%. To interpret this score, the study adopted the Nigerian academic grading system, 'A' (70% and above) which is excellent, 'B' (60-69%) represents good, 'C' (50-59%) represents average, 'D' (45-49%) is considered fair, 'E' (40-44%) is considered a pass, and 'F' (39% and below) is considered a failure. Based on this grading system, the employees' quality of work life is "excellent", which implies that they perceive the hotel work environment to be a very conducive one for excellent job performance.

4.3 Perception of selected Minna hotel employees regarding the leadership style adopted by their managers

Table 3, Employees' Perceptions of Managers' Leadership Styles

S/N	Leadership style adopted	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
1	Transformational	75	2	13	7.81
2	Transactional	75	0	12	8.80

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

It can be observed from Table 3 that the hotel employees surveyed scored their managers' transformational leadership ability 7.81 out of a maximum of 13 (60%), while they felt that their managers practiced a transactional leadership style more often with a mean score of 8.80 out of a maximum score of 12 (73%).

4.4 Relationship between Leadership Style and Employees' Quality of Work Life

In fulfilling the study's aim of determining if a relationship exists between leadership style and employees' quality of work life, the relationship between each of the two leadership styles and employee's quality of work life were determined using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Table 4 presents the results.

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Table 4, Relationship between leadership styles and employees' quality of work life

		TFL	QWL
T	Pearson Correlation	1	.787**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	75	75
TRS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.628**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	75	75

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

TFL – Transformational leadership style

TRS – Transactional leadership style

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

In determining the direction of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee's quality of work life, Table 4.5 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.787, which means that there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee's quality of work life levels in the hotel. In other words, transformational leadership has a positive impact on employees' quality of work life. Furthermore, the strength of the relationship between leadership style and employee's quality of work life is very strong, based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines ($r = .10$ to $.29$ represent small, $r = .30$ to $.49$ represent medium and $r = .50$ to 1.0 represent large).

Finally, the coefficient of determination between transformational leadership style and employee's quality of work life is 0.62 (0.787^2). This means that transformational leadership style was able to explain 62% of the variance in employees' quality of work life. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a very strong relationship between transformational leadership style and employee's quality of work life in this study.

Hypothesis 1 of this study stated that transformational leadership style has a positive impact on employee well-being in hotels located in Minna Niger state. From the results obtained, this hypothesis was supported as transformational leadership style was shown to have a strong, positive impact on employee quality of work life. In determining the direction of the relationship between transactional leadership and employees' quality of work life, Table 4 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two variables is $-.628$, which means that there is a negative correlation between transactional leadership and employees' quality of work life in the hotel. In other words, the more a manager practices a transactional style of leadership, the more the quality of work life of the hotel employees decline.

Furthermore, the strength of the relationship between transactional leadership style and employees quality of work life is very strong based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines ($r = .10$ to $.29$ represent small, $r = .30$ to $.49$ represent medium and $r = .50$ to 1.0 represent large). Finally, the coefficient of determination between transactional leadership style and employees' quality of work life is 0.39 (0.628^2). This means that transactional leadership style was able to explain 39% of the variance in employees' quality of work life. According to Pallant (2011), any coefficient of determination above 30% is considered significant for social science studies. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a strong, negative relationship between transactional leadership and employee quality of work life.

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Hypothesis 2 of this study stated that transactional leadership style has a negative impact on employee well-being in hotels located in Minna Niger state. From the results obtained, this hypothesis was supported as transactional leadership style was shown to have a strong, negative impact on employee quality of work life.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This research work investigated the relationship between leadership style and employees well-being in the hotel industry located in Minna, Niger state. The study found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee well-being, while transactional leadership has a negative impact on employee well-being. This study makes contributions in three realms, (1) Knowledge, (2) Practice and (3) Policy. These contributions are discussed in the following sections. As regards its contribution to knowledge, this study provides a valuable Nigerian perspective on the relationship between leadership style and employee quality of work life. Most previous studies with the same objective have been conducted in developed countries. This study provided evidence that the expected relationship exists in a developing country context.

As regards its contribution to practice, this study's findings provides important information to Nigerian hotel owners specifically, and Nigerian small businesses generally on the importance of ensuring that managers are trained to adopt leadership styles that will improve employee well-being. Ensuring that employees are highly motivated is an important strategy to ensure customers are satisfied. Satisfied customers are crucial for the sustained viability and growth of any small business, particularly the hotel industry where customer experience is the fundamental service being offered. Finally, this study contributes to policy by enlightening Nigerian policy makers on the need to establish rules that ensure that hotel owner treat their employees properly if tourism is expected to be a major revenue source for the Nigerian economy.

With respect to the study limitations and future research, this study would like to point out the following, Firstly, as the study only focused on hotels in Minna, the generalizability of the results cannot be taken for granted as Minna has its peculiar characteristics which might not be found in other locations. Future research should include a more representative sample by exploring hotels in different parts of the country.

Secondly, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey with a correlation as the data analytical method, which means that cause and effect cannot be guaranteed. Future research should employ a longitudinal design that is better equipped to test for causation. Finally, whilst the study has shown that transformational and transactional leadership styles play an important role in predicting employee well-being, it does not address the specific mechanism by which this occurs. Future research should explore other mediating constructs that may help better explain the influence of leadership style on employee well-being.

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