

## LEADERS-FOLLOWERS RELATIONSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: EXPERIENCE FROM NIGERIA

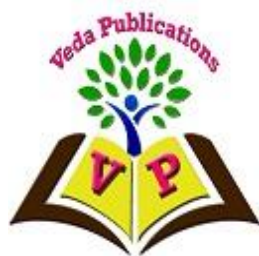
**Yusuf Abubakar Abiola**

*Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife*

[yusufabiola50@gmail.com](mailto:yusufabiola50@gmail.com)

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### Abstract



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The issue of organisation effectiveness has become a global concern most especially, in Nigeria. Often time, observations have shown that organisations in Nigeria have suffered from effective leaders-follower relationship the leaders-relationship which seems to have hinders organisation effectiveness. Hence, the researcher, therefore, conducted this study to unveil information on leaders-followers relationship and organisational effectiveness: Experience from Nigeria. To achieve this general purpose, the researcher foremost discussed leader-member exchange (LMX) theory which the study was built upon. Also, extensive literatures were reviewed on leaders-followers relationship, productive leader, and organisational effectiveness. Thereafter, the researcher presented a conceptual model and theoretical contributions representing the usefulness of the LMX theory in relation to leaders-member exchange relationship. Also, it succinctly discussed empirical review on leaders-followers relationships and organisational effectiveness. Lastly, it makes appropriate conclusions and draws recommendations.

**Keywords:** *Leaders, Followers, Organisation Effectiveness, Role-Making, Role-Taking, Routinisation*

## Introduction

Around the world, organisation effectiveness connotes the extent to which the predetermined goals and objectives of an organization are achieved with the given amount of resources and means without placing undue strain on its employees. On this note, it is generally acknowledged that organisation as a social unit whether public or private are establish optimal effectiveness. In this sense, organisation as a social unit precisely consists of fundamental elements such as leaders who are supervisors and followers considered as subordinates that are willing to work together to accomplish common set of organisational tasks in relation to its objectives, aims, and goals. To achieve these demanding organisational tasks, the usefulness of a reciprocity leader-follower relationship is imminent. Therefore, the leader is one of the paramount elements of the organisation that give instructions, interact, motivate, and keep followers on track in order to achieve optimal productivity or outcome.

In this context, the leaders are regarded as the principals, the followers as the teachers and organisation is the school system. It is no doubt that the success of an organisation (school) is appropriately determined by the commitment and quality of people both the leaders (principals) and followers (followers) that undeniably serve as the most valuable assets. Hence, the attainment of organizational goals would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, if there were no specific individuals with the authority and responsibility to plan, organize, coordinate, lead and control activities. Therefore, the need for effective leaders-followers relationship becomes unequivocal when considering the effectiveness of the organisation (Ann-Louise & Sten, 2015).

It is on this premise that the current study was conducted to unveil information on leaders-followers relationship and organisational effectiveness in north central Nigeria. To achieve this general purpose, the researcher foremost discussed leader-member exchange (LMX) theory which the study was built upon. Also, extensive literatures were reviewed on leaders-followers relationship, productive leader, and organisational effectiveness. Thereafter, the researcher presented a conceptual model and theoretical contributions representing the usefulness of the LMX theory in relation to leaders-member exchange relationship. Also, it succinctly discussed empirical review on leaders-followers relationships and organisational effectiveness. Lastly, it makes appropriate conclusions and draws recommendations.

### **A Brief on Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory**

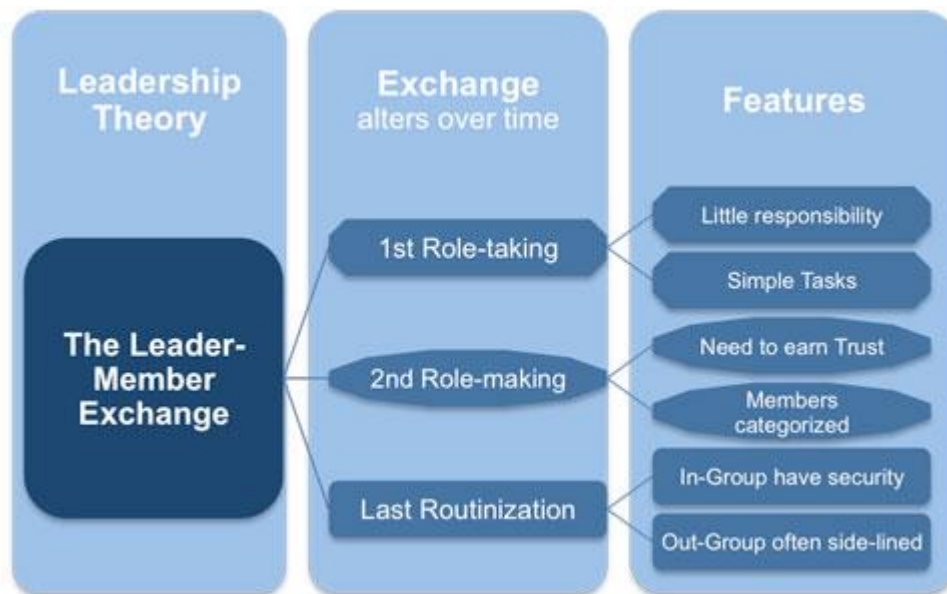
This study was hinged on Leader-Member-Exchange Theory. The theory was first proposed in the 70's by Dansereau, Graen & Haga (1975). In fact, the fundamental assumption of the leader-member exchange theory is that it is very paramount to recognize the existence of in-groups and out-groups within a group or an organization by considering the degree to which leader-follower relationship serves a strong mechanism through which leader-member exchange behaviour affects organisation outcome (Cheung & Wu, 2012). In addition, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory suggests that both the leaders and followers exhibit or develop unique relationships based on their social exchanges, and the quality of these exchanges within an organization can influence organization outcomes (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015).

According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the theory is a relationship-based method of leadership that encompasses the two-way (dyadic) relationship that links leaders (supervisors) with the followers (subordinates). The theory is adopted to measure the quality of exchange pertaining to respect, support, trust, and loyalty between supervisors (leaders) and subordinates (followers). In addition, Rockstuhl, James, Ang, and Shore (2012) postulated that leader-member-exchange theory that is called Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory claims that leaders' treatment towards each of the subordinates exhibits a difference to the extent that work-related behaviour and attitudes of the subordinates depend on how they are treated by their leader. The Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) further suggests that leaders in an organisation develop an automatically quality relationship with every individual follower or subordinate and that the quality of this relationship efficiently and effectively influences the decision making, responsibility, access to resources, and their performance.

Kahrobaei and Mortazavi (2016) identified that this made the leader establish two sides of employees, the in-group and the out-group employees in the organisation. Concerning the in-group members, they are given more opportunities to carry out the task they do, more chances for personal development, more attention, and constantly greater rewards. On the other hand, the out-group members are given work that isn't challenging, receive less attention to demonstrate their capacities on the job, and fewer rewards. By and large, the leader-member exchange theory has been acknowledged as a central approach for exploring organizational relationships. According to this theory, positive interactions between leaders and followers have several benefits for both individuals and organizations including

improved job attitudes and behaviour of employees (Kocoglu, Gurkan & Aktas, 2014). In this direction, it is evident that leader-member exchange relationships are predisposed to generate effectively tinged connections between leaders and followers either negatively or positively.

### Theoretical Model on Leaders-Followers Relationship



The above model indicates the usefulness of the leader-member exchange theory on the leaders-followers relationship. The first input in the organisation is the adoption of the leader-member exchange theory. For a productive leader to achieve success, three basic or mode of relationships which includes 1st role-making, 2nd role-making, and routinisation are presumably to exist an organisation. From these three modes of relationship, the followers in the organisation are given little responsibility with simple tasks in the 1st stage of the relationship. In the second stage of the relationship, the need for the leader need to earn trust and ensures the categorisation of members, while at the last stage which has to do with routinisation, the in-group have security and the out-group is often side-lined.

### Clarification of concepts

Clarifications of the following concepts were made: Effective leader, leaders-followers relationship and organisation effectiveness. Thereafter, the relationship between leaders-followers relationship and organisation effectiveness were succinctly discussed.

### **An Effective Leader**

A leader is one that usually has the authority, responsibility, and opportunity to influence as well, work collaboratively with others to initiate plans, organize, coordinate, and control day-to-day activities at all levels of the organisation to successfully bring about achieving optimal outcomes. In this direction, an effective leader performs paramount role in an organisation by giving direction and coordinating the activities of the followers to ensure the accomplishment of organisation mission, vision, and goals. Oftentimes, the image of a an effective leader and its quality of leadership is reflected through the attitude of the followers who are subordinates most especially, in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities. According to Ibrahim and Daniel (2019), an effective leader is one that uses his organizing power to decide the pattern of relationship, task operation, and work behaviour.

In the view of Yukl (2009), an effective leader constantly influence and direct the activities of an organized group considered as followers to accomplish common goals through positive interaction and communication. Ann-Louise and Sten (2015) purported that an effective leader is a manager who has a vision for the organisation, who communicates regularly with the lower-level members, and who is able to influence their behaviours. Consequently, upon this, it can be inferred that an effective leaders must be objective, perceptive, to establish proper priorities to enhance the interpersonal relationship between themselves and their followers. As a result, it is no doubt that organizations' objectives cannot be fulfill or expected results can be achieved in in isolation, except, with employees characterised by quality relationships by those working in the system.

### **Leaders-Followers Relationship**

Relationship refers to a state of connectedness and association that involves mutual dealings between people. It is essential to note that relationships among employees working together in the same organisation increase and foster employees' morale, engagement and lead to greater satisfaction. This relationship concerns daily activities and is directed to create a safe and sustainable environment within the organisation (Amabile, 2014). The need for positive relationship through effective and efficient leaders in the organisation is very vital because tasks are interdependent and no employee can work in isolation without the assistance of other employees. Therefore, a leader is a person formally designated to interact with members in such a way that galvanises their performance towards improving the quality of productivity in an organisation (Bunjak, Cerne, & Wong, 2019).

In this sense, followers are defined as employees who are mostly low in rank and exhibit the willingness and commitment to cooperate by working towards the accomplishment of the organisation mission. They are presumed to have less influence, authority, and power, unlike their supervisors who, therefore, usually, but not invariably fall into line. In the view of Salas-Vallina (2020) followers are regarded as employees that exhibit more ethical behaviours and positive approaches towards developing better relationships with their leaders in a bid to foster interaction and sustained engagement for the achievement of a quality outcome. Based on this, Chiang and Birtch (2013) posited that a good follower is expected to trust and rely on the leader, show enthusiasm, reveal dependence, and, to a certain extent, try to follow the leader's ideas and behave in a civil way towards other employees at work. This situation suggests that it is no doubt that the leaders-followers relationship plays an imminent role in an organisation. Without it, the benefit for which an organisation is established cannot be accomplished.

Leaders-followers relationship is a construct that depicts a share expectation for managing and maintaining the established social system to generate a positive outcome. In the view of Imen, Jose, Pep and Vicenc (2018), leaders-followers relationship is perceived to be an alternating binary relationship or connection between two individual(s), where one individual sometimes occupies leadership roles and responsibilities, while the other individual occupies followership roles and responsibilities assumes under certain conditions the roles and responsibilities. Fundamentally, the leader-followers relationship is about constant discipline, openness, trust, and respect. Ruiz, Ruiz and Marínez (2011) conceptualized the leaders-followers relationship as a passionate and dyadic interpersonal process as a result of micro-level relational processes. In this sense, the leaders-followers relationship is conceived as a process where an individual or group of individuals who are supervisors or superordinate influence a group or a person regarded as followers to move in a certain direction in order to accomplish a common goal.

In addition, Avinash and Abbas (2015) averred that leaders-followers relationship has been conceptualized as the ability of a leader to influence the behaviour of others (followers) towards the achievement of set goals and objectives in any given organisation. It could also be perceived as the continuously social interaction that occurs between leaders and followers as they fulfill (and occasionally alternate in) these roles. In line with the above, Kocoglu et al. (2014) averred that the leaders-follower relationship is a wide term referring to a conscious

and bi-directional quality relationship between the leaders and followers. **The importance of the leaders-followers relationship in an organisation cannot be underscored.** According to Robert (2013), leaders-followers relationship is one of the most paramount work-related factors. Robert (2013) further stated that the dynamics of leaders-follower relationship has changed from the traditional approach on management which believe that ‘the leader is in control and followers are being controlled.

According to Omobude and Umemeia (2018), the quality of leaders-followers relationship can be divided into two groups of relationship categories of high-quality and low-quality leadership-followers relationship. A high-quality leadership relationship develops trust and information sharing with the followers as well as facilitating them to optimally show positive behaviour in discharging their duties and in turn made them be more engaged to perform better, probably because of the feeling of support they received from their leaders in their capabilities by trusting not to distract them (Chiang, & Birtch, 2011). In line with this, the quality of leadership in an organisation makes to sides of employee emanate. The two sides are the in-group and the out-group. It is usually observed that the in-group members always carry out specific tasks within the personal circle of leaders. In addition, they are given more responsibilities, attention, opportunities, as well as greater rewards to fulfill the work they do.

On the other hand, the out-group members are presumed to usually receive fewer rewards, responsibilities, and attention. The situation however made exchanging of leadership action that causes displeasure and friction among the out-group. Aside from this, it perhaps gives more opportunities to able and capable employees to develop themselves. Therefore, Walumbwa, Cropanzano and Goldman (2011) identified four different followership patterns which include: individualist, resource, implementer, and partner. As regards individualists, it is perceived to be someone who engages in low levels of supervisory support but high levels of challenge for a leader. Also, a resource is someone who will not support or challenge their leader. In the case of implementers, they usually support their leaders but don’t challenge them, but they are known for doing the bulk of the day-to-day work, and partners are people who show both high levels of support and challenge for their leaders (Muijs, 2011). Therefore, partners have an inherent need to be seen as equal to their leaders about quality leader-follower relationships, intellect, and skill levels.

Muijs (2011) further stated **that the leaders-followers relationship is an important aspect in an organisation as it gives the leader the ability to influence the behaviour of employees, helps employees in fulfilling their needs, introducing the required changes, solving conflicts effectively, as well as motivating and building morale.** Leaders and follower are essential components, in which it entails a positive connection or interaction between the leader and the follower and it is expected to enhance positive engagement in terms of attitude and behaviour as it affects organization outcome. These emphases according to Robert (2013) showed that quality relationships ideally, encouraged people to develop appropriate skills, not only the willingness to work but also the willingness to carry out challenging tasks with zeal and confidence. Similarly in most cases, when the relationship is on the low effectiveness plane, the leaders and followers' outcome would likely be low. Aside from this, it is no doubt that the leaders-followers relationship can empower and enable people to deliver their best, in such a way that both the organisation and all the individuals involved benefit.

### **Organisation Effectiveness**

Organizational effectiveness was defined differently by different authors from different context. For instance, *Alastaire, Coldwell and Callaghan (2013) perceived organizational effectiveness is a construct that is realistic in the values and preferences of evaluators.* This implies that organizational effectiveness points towards effective, prudent, and strategic use of all the organizational resources, namely, Human, Financial and Technological resources for creating competitive advantage. *An, Yom and Ruggiero (2011) averred that organisation effectiveness is the efficiency with which an association can meet its objectives.* This means an organization that produces the desired effect or an organization that is productive without waste. *Braun, Ferreira and Sydow (2013) posited that organizational effectiveness also calls for creating sustainable growth and development by taking care of not only the shareholders' expectations but also the expectations of other stakeholders.*

It also means that management takes the right ethical decisions in the interest of all the stakeholders. Considering these definitions, it can be inferred that **organizational effectiveness** is the extent to which the predetermined goals and objectives of an organization are achieved with the given amount of resources and means without placing undue strain on its employees. Therefore, the importance of organizational effectiveness cannot be understated. The reason is that it is apparent that a more effective organization will be better



at achieving its desired goals and objectives when several key elements or building blocks are appropriately put in place, activities are strategically prioritise, and holistically coordinated (Rahimi, & Vahedi, 2011). Based on this, Alastaire, Coldwell and Callaghan (2013) identified organisation effectiveness benefit as improve organisational structure improvement, value, as well as employees and clients' engagement.

In this context, school effectiveness is one the major issues of concern in the education sector which could be view in terms of goal attainment, functional approach, and system-resource approach. In this sense, goal attainment approach could be regarded as one the organisational effectiveness criterion which has to do with the maximization of profits by providing an effective service that could lead to high productivity. The functional approach of effectiveness is characterised by the organizational goals problem identification. It is, therefore, assumed that organizational goals problem identification focus towards asking vital questions in determining how well an organization is doing for the super-ordinate system. In the case of system-resource approach of organizational effectiveness, it emphasizes the interdependency of the processes that relate the organization to its environment. This interdependence takes the form of input-output transactions and includes scarce and valued resources such as physical, economic and human for which every organization competes favourably (Braun, Ferreira, & Sydow, 2013).

### **Leaders-followers Relationships and Organisation Effectiveness**

Series of studies have been conducted on leaders-followers relationship with other variables and organisation effectiveness with other others variables. To the best of the researchers' knowledge known seems to have been done on the relationship between leaders-followers relationship and organisation effectiveness. Ruiz et al. (2011) investigated the implications of the ethical leader's influences on followers as it relates to ethics and organisation effectiveness with a view to indicates the moral dimension of leaders impacts the leader-follower relationship. It was found that that the leaders-followers relationship is good as individual followers perceive moral as a paramount outcome in an organisation.

The finding suggested that high-quality relationship of followers with their leaders is positively related to employee engagement and their work role performance and improved organisation effectiveness. Similarly, found that quality relationships by supervisors had a positive impact on specific effectiveness related to the followers and organisation in terms of

turnover intention, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship. Based on this, Northouse (2013) found that leaders and followers who have good relationships have better attitudes and accomplish more, and help the organization advance and prosper. Avey, Bruce and Luthans (2011) revealed that a leader is an undeniably and important person that possess a wide range of characteristics and make use of a most vital set of quality relationship to achieve organisation goals. In addition, Avey et al. (2011) further showed that leaders-follower relationship usefulness in organization is informed of positive dialogues and behaviour, where knowledge, values, and ethics are important for both the leaders and followers.

Furthermore, Amabile (2014) focused on motivating leader-follower creativity, relationship and the leadership self-identity of the follower can be used to create leadership development. It was found that the quality of the leader-follower relationship fosters the elements of leadership in all employees and encourages more innovative techniques developed to solve challenges within organizations, thereby increasing organisation effectiveness. In addition to this, Müceldili, Turan, & Erdil (2013) found that having positive leaders-relationship skills and information is important because followers who are feeling valued, inspired, and motivated are more prone to perform at higher levels, individually and within teams in order to achieve positive organisation effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

The study was conducted to examine leaders-followers relationships and organisational effectiveness in North central Nigeria. Therefore, it was concluded based on the critical discussions that quality relationships through the application of leader-member exchange theory by productive leader as well as leaders-followers relationship could make organisation to thrive or achieve maximum effectiveness,

### **Recommendations**

In the view of the foregoing, it was recommended that the promotion of consistent vision, mission, and a set of values to all designated members in the organisation through positive and quality relationships is required by the leader in a bid to improve organisation effectiveness. In addition, since the dynamics of power and influences inherent within the leader is sometimes follower-centric in terms of positive or negative perception, where followers are dissatisfied with the status quo, it is expected or very vital for the leader (supervisor) to create an in-group relationship with their followers to improve and stimulate

innovative working condition. Consequently, upon the above, the government should endeavour to organise training programmes for organizations in a bid to strengthen positive leaders-followers relationship and make them to be more motivated and committed towards task that will enhance organisational effectiveness.

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