

# Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employees' Turnover: Evidence from The Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIRO), Lagos State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

We investigated the relationship between leadership styles and employee turnover at the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIRO), Lagos, Nigeria. The study interviewed 115 respondents while study data were analyzed using Likert ratings, Chi-square, Correlation, and Multiple regression analyses. Results revealed that laissez-faire (Mean= 3.76 ± 0.29), transformational (Mean= 3.59 ±0.95) and transactional leadership styles (Mean= 3.54 ±1.02) were the reported dominant leadership styles. Low staff turnover was reported (78.6%) for the organization under focus, while significant associations exist between employee turnover intention and their educational level ( $\chi^2=6.149$ ,  $df=3$ ) and staff status ( $\chi^2=9.61$ ,  $df=5$ ). Also, PPMC results indicated a negative relationship between monthly salary ( $r = -0.688$ ,  $p \leq 0.012$ ) and employee turnover, as well as a positive relationship between employee turnover and organizational leadership style ( $r=0.471$ ,  $p \leq 0.00$ ). Regression results revealed that employee turnover was significantly increased by transactional leadership ( $\beta=0.235$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and laissez-faire leadership styles ( $\beta=0.333$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

We concluded that a transformational leadership style would foster employee job satisfaction and retention in the organization. Scaling up staff salaries would, therefore, ensure higher employee stability and hence, lower turnover.

(Keywords: employee turnover, employee retention, leadership style, human capital, human resources, Federal Institute of Industrial Research)

## INTRODUCTION

Human capital development is one of the necessary precursors of economic development (Gruzina, *et al.*, 2021). The need for good leadership to mentor this economically important resource through good management cannot, therefore, be over-emphasized as it is crucial to achieving set goals and objectives of any organization (Pasban, 2016; Obiekwe, 2018; Kadian-Baumeyer and Kwong, 2021).

Leadership describes the managers' abilities to apply relevant skills and competence in organizing performance processes through guiding, inspiring, igniting and motivating a group of people or teams, to meet set organizational vision and goals (Jabbar and Hussain, 2017). A good leader will thus design strategies and methods to effectively achieve the organizational goals with a high level of efficiency (Al-Malki and Juan, 2018; Hussain, *et al.*, 2018; Kadian-Baumeyer and Kwong, 2021).

The leadership style adopted by any organization determines the ease with which such an organization can efficiently maximize achievement of its set objectives. Leadership styles are the specific behaviors applied by a leader to guide followers in decision-making, support and inspire them to achieve the organizational objectives (Al-Khaled and Fenn, 2020). Different classifications of leadership styles abound but the three important styles of leadership, namely, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire according to Gameda and Lee (2020) are the focus of this study:

**Transformational Leadership:** This is a people-oriented leadership style where the leader works with the team to identify needed change and inspires team members to execute the identified change (Khan, *et al.*, 2020). Transformational leaders are committed to their followers' growth; they broaden and elevate their followers' interests, stimulate awareness, and provide enabling environment for their followers to transcend their interests for the betterment of the organization (Lai, *et al.*, 2020). In this organizational leadership style, there is emotional attachment between the leader and the followers (Steinmann, *et al.*, 2018); the leader, therefore, plays an important role in ensuring that organizational activities are meaningful for followers. As submitted by Effiyanti, *et al.*, (2021) and Jaroliya and Gyanchandani (2022), the relationship building process fostering enhanced leader-follower trust and support is central to transformational leadership. Transformational leaders thus strategically enhance employee job satisfaction levels by imparting a clear organizational mission, vision and values to their followers, which in turn, results in effective attainment of organizational goals.

**Transactional leadership:** This leadership style involves the exchange of rewards and targets between employees and management. Sirin, *et al.* (2018) defines this style as the transaction of needs engulfment from both the organization and employees. Transactional leadership style mainly helps create an environment that is optimal for employee performance, sustaining human capacities, thus, having an overall positive impact on the organizational performance (Al Khajeh, 2018 and Kalsoom, *et al.*, 2018). Transactional leaders fulfill employee reward needs when organizational targets are met (Hussain, *et al.*, 2017). Transactional leaders' effort is targeted at ensuring employees clearly understand the goal to be achieved and how, while also ensuring that possible barriers to the goal's attainments are eliminated, for the timely attainment of the goals (Al Khajeh, 2018). Transactional leaders, however, have high expectations from their subordinates. In this leadership style, employees' goals attainment is rewarded, either in the form of an impressive performance review and promotion, salary increment, or the assignment of new responsibilities. Similarly, Udin, *et al.*, (2022) submitted that the transactional leadership style discourages creativity and innovation among employees; hence, this leadership style may

negatively affect the long-term growth of the organization.

**Laissez-Faire Leadership:** This organizational leadership style could be described as a laid-back style in which the leader exerts minimal control or guidance over the employees' activities toward attaining the organization's pre-determined goals. The followers are free to fulfil assigned tasks or responsibilities with minimal supervision (Robert and Vandenberghe, 2021); based on the managerial belief that rules and regulations are unnecessary, since every member of the organization has sense of responsibility. This is a free-reign leadership style; the employees can determine their policies and methods of goals achievement. It is important to emphasize that since managers and employees are afforded opportunities to express their opinions and make decisions, they feel a sense of organizational belonging and are motivated to contribute more towards the organizational growth (Okpokwasili and Kalu, 2021). In laissez-faire leadership, the manager believes that each employee understands their responsibilities, duties, and rights; there is no need for organizational rules and regulations (Iqbal, *et al.*, 2021). A laissez-faire leadership approach, when applied in a school management system, may be more creative and fulfilling.

Leadership interaction with subordinates should, however, provide a marked impression on employees' productivity while reducing turnover. Poor leadership on the other hand could negatively affect the employee's ability to maintain ethical standards, productivity, and turnover. Buzeti, *et al.* (2016) described employee turnover as the mobility of the labor force around the labor market, between companies, unemployment, and employment states, and between occupations and jobs.

Turnover Intention of Employees could simply be described as the possibility of an employee intending to exit the organization, either immediately, permanently or in the future (Lyons and Bandura, 2020). It is the final step in the decision-making process before his or her final departure from an organization. The turnover intention of employees in an organization determines the rate of actual employee turnover in the organization. Employee turnover could be categorized as voluntary, in which employees choose to carry on working or not for the

organization. Employee turnover could also be involuntary, whereby the organization influences the employees' choice of whether to leave the organization by rewarding or retrenching staff who have demonstrated low productivity levels respectively (Farid and El-Sawalhy, 2018). Several factors could influence employee turnover. These factors may include job satisfaction, leadership styles, organizational commitment, trust in the organization, job insecurity and job stress (Windon, *et al.*, 2019), low salaries and inflexible work schedules, career improvement prospects, burnout, and work-family conflict (Tsai, *et al.*, 2021). Stable firms or organizations with clear employee career advancement paths can attract and retain employees; thus, they have a low employee turnover rate. Also, employees are more comfortable with organizations, which affords them the opportunity of involving in the organization's decision-making process (Farid and El-Sawalhy, 2018).

Unfair payment reward system could greatly influence employee turnover as highly competent and productive employees could leave the organization if they are poorly remunerated, relative to their work efforts and productivity levels (Castro-Silva and Lima, 2022). Other organizational factors that could cause high employee turnover include poor recruiting practices and managerial styles, a toxic work environment, and an inadequate compensation system. Furthermore, job stress and job dissatisfaction are vital factors driving organizational employee turnover. Other personal influencers of employee turnover are employee sense of powerlessness and poor locus of control (Firth, *et al.*, 2004) and the prevailing unemployment rate in society as well as job role's ambiguity (Wang and Wang, 2020).

Organizational turnovers often rely on employees' job satisfaction, which could be financial or moral. Hence, employee turnover can economically cause a decline or increase in an organization's production statistics. At the same time, employees' turnover increases the cost of advertising, recruitment, training, and retention of employees by the organization (Chowdury and Nazmul, 2017). In developing countries, most organizations are faced with challenges of employees' low commitment to work, poor performance, insufficient workforce and increase in employees' turnover intention which ultimately results in declining growth and effectiveness.

Individuals having high turnover intention are often considered less productive, and always looking for opportunities to leave the organization. Byrnes (2021) identified that the rising rate of employee turnover in the workplace could be adduced to poor leadership styles and level of job satisfaction. Dissatisfied workers will be more willing to leave the organization than their satisfied counterparts (Ntimba, *et al.*, 2021).

Studies (Agyemang and Asamoah, 2016; Ntenga and Awuor, 2018; Sulamutu and Yusof, 2018, Aldarmaki and Kasim, 2019, and Mugizi, *et al.*, 2019) conducted studies on the effects of leadership styles on employee turnover across several economic sectors such as banking, transportation, brewing and other commercial firms respectively. There are, however, no related work on it in the research institutes and even in Nigeria. This study is thus highly essential as a complementary information to existing body of knowledge on the topic, given the critical relevance of research to solving societal problems, guiding, and implementing policy decisions, as well as driving sustainable national growth and development. This study's findings will further provide valuable information to Nigerian administrators of private and public organizations and other stakeholders, on the most desirable leadership approach that encourages staff retention/management in workplaces.

## METHODOLOGY

Primary data obtained with the aid of structured questionnaire was used for this study. A sample of 115 employees out of 384 employees of the Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi (FIIRO), Lagos State, Nigeria, was selected for this study using a simple random sampling technique. FIIRO, Lagos State, Nigeria lies between Longitude 6.5313°N and Latitude 3.325°E. Complete information was elicited from 98 employees (giving a total return rate of 85.2%), and these were used for analyses and inferences for this study. The obtained data were analyzed using tools like Descriptive statistics, Chi-square, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple regression analyses.

Following the method of Mobley (1982), employees' turnover was measured using a three-item perceptual statement. These statements are: 'I think a lot about leaving/quitting

my present job; I will probably apply for a new job in the coming year; and, as soon as possible, I will leave the organization.

## RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

### Socioeconomic Characteristics

The results indicated that the average age of the employees is about 37 years, with about 53.1% of the employees being between the age range of 31- 40 years, indicating that most of the employees were at their economically active age. Although there were more males (54.1%) relative to females (46.0%). This suggests the absence of gender bias/discrimination in the organization. Also, 68.0% of the employees had tertiary education, while about 24.5% of the employees had a form of post-graduate education. This result supports Adewole (2017) findings that skilled personnel are employed in the organization. The average year of work experience recorded was ten years, while 29.0% respondents had put between 10 and 20 years of service in the organization, with 10.2% having had above 20 years of FIIRO job experience. This indicates that a reasonable population of staff members are old employees in the organization; hence, they are familiar with the leadership styles in operation.

### Leadership Styles

Table 1 indicates that Laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership styles were observed by respondents. The Laissez-faire leadership style had the highest mean ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.76), implying its popularity in the organization. Also, employees expressed a low level of involvement of their boss on assigned tasks ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.21); were challenged to take personal responsibilities, which made them very productive ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.14). Even though the bosses usually delegated powers to subordinates ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.11) yet the bosses liked making the critical decisions ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.08). This implies that employees had confidence in their abilities as they appreciated their leaders' low involvement in assigned tasks. This is consistent with the submissions of Wu and Shiu (2009), that laissez-faire leaders allow their followers to carry out their assigned tasks with minimal supervision.

**Table 1:** Leadership Styles in FIIRO, Nigeria.

Perceptual Statements	Mean	SD
<b>Laissez-faire leader</b>	3.76	0.29
Being an expert in my field, I appreciate low level of involvement of my boss on assigned tasks	4.21	1.29
I am usually challenged to take personal responsibilities, and this has made me very productive	4.14	0.85
My boss usually delegates powers to subordinates	4.11	1.10
My boss likes making the decision	4.08	0.82
<b>Transformational leader</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.95</b>
My boss emphasizes the importance of our organization's mission	4.16	0.97
My superior stresses the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	4.06	0.87
My superior talks optimistically about the future of the organization	4.04	1.11
Our superior imparts sense of power and confidence in me	3.92	1.03
Our superior express confidence on goal achievement	3.82	1.23
<b>Transactional Leader</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>1.02</b>
My boss expresses satisfaction when performance is high	4.39	1.27
My boss does not wait for things to go wrong before taking action	4.15	3.27
Our boss makes known to us the reward for exceptional performance towards organizational goal attainment	3.81	1.23
Our superiors believe in not making changes unless it is absolutely necessary	3.60	1.25

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

A- Always, Of- Often, Oc- Occasionally, S- Seldom, N- Never.

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Also, it was found that transformational leadership style had the next higher grand mean ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.59). In this leadership style, the leader emphasized the importance of the organization's mission ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.16), stressed the significance of strong sense of purpose ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.06), talked optimistically about the future of the organization ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.04), imparted a sense of power and confidence ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.92) and expressed confidence in goal achievement ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.82) of employees. This conforms to Tafvelin (2013) who found out that transformational leaders motivate followers through awareness of the critical role of task outcomes in achieving overall organizational goals, inducing them to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization and activating their higher-order needs.

Furthermore, the transactional leadership style had a relatively low grand mean ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.54). The leader in this category expressed satisfaction when performance is high ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.39), while being supportive and appreciative of employees' effort which was put into the work ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.16), and they acted proactively before things go wrong ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.15). Also, the boss rewarded exceptional performance towards organizational goal attainment ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.81). These attitudes according to Kalsoom, *et al.*, (2018) and Sirin, *et al.*, (2018) are capable of stimulating and sustaining employee productivity.

### **Employees turnover intention at Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO), Nigeria**

The distribution of employee turnover intention in FIIRO, Nigeria, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Distribution of employee's turnover intention in the organization

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I can leave my job when presented with a suitable offer	3.93	0.89
My most important needs at work are not compromised	3.90	0.94
I think about starting my own business	3.90	1.01
I always look forward to another day at work	3.67	1.10
I always consider leaving my current job	3.64	1.14
I daydream about a different job that will suit my personal needs	3.63	1.06
Family responsibilities prevent me from leaving my current employer	3.57	1.20
Opportunities for personal development at my workplace are not jeopardized	3.50	1.20
My current job affects my well-being positively	3.42	1.23
I constantly go through newspapers and other forms of social media for job opportunities	3.20	1.19
The trouble of relocating prevents me from leaving my current employer	3.15	1.27
I am not emotionally agitated when arriving home from work	3.11	1.21
My interest in the available/provided benefits scheme prevents me from leaving my current employer.	3.09	1.09
My current job satisfies my personal needs.	2.79	1.24

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree. Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentage

Findings indicated that while employees nursed the idea of leaving their current job, they felt that their current job at the institute satisfied their current needs, but if they got suitable offer elsewhere ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.93  $\pm$ 0.89), they will leave their job. This implies latency of employee turnover intention at the institute. Arising from this, employees daydreamed about jobs that will suit their personal needs ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.63  $\pm$ 1.06), or at best, start their own business if they have the financial wherewithal ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.90  $\pm$ 1.01). On the contrary too, results are suggestive that the organization was relatively conducive for work because employees' most essential needs at work were currently not compromised at the institution ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.90  $\pm$ 0.94), and as such they always look forward to being at work ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.67  $\pm$ 1.10), while opportunities for personal development at the workplace were also not jeopardized ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.50  $\pm$ 1.20).

### **Level of Employee Turnover at the Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO), Nigeria**

Table 3 indicated that the majority (78.6%) of the sampled FIIRO employees reported a low employee turnover experience. This result is therefore not surprising given the findings recorded about perceptions of employee's turnover intention in Table 2.

**Table 3:** Employees' Turnover in FIIRO.

Variables	Interval	Per cent
Low Turnover	14 - 42	78.6
High Turnover	43 - 70	21.4
		<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey, 2019

### **Association between Employees' Socioeconomic Characteristics and Turnover Intention**

The result of Chi square analysis of the association between socioeconomic characteristics and turnover intention of employees FIIRO is presented in Table 4.



**Table 4:** Association between Employees' Socioeconomic Characteristics and Turnover Intention.

Variables	Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	Degree of freedom	Decision
Sex	1.827	1	NS
Marital status	5.289	3	NS
Staff category	3.390	3	NS
Educational level	6.149	3	S
Religion	0.256	1	NS
Staff status	9.616	5	S

Source: Field survey, 2019; p-value is significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

Results indicated a statistically significant level of association between the employee's educational level ( $\chi^2=6.149$ ,  $df=3$ ), staff status ( $\chi^2=9.61$ ,  $df=5$ ) and turnover intention. A higher educational level implies a higher degree of staff specialization and expertise, impacting the employee's turnover intention. High staff status, which could imply the attainment to a higher position, level of income and respect within the organization, may positively affect the organizations' staff retention capacity.

The results estimate of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses of employees' turnover intention, socioeconomic characteristics, and leadership styles are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5:** Relationship between Employees' Socioeconomic Characteristics and Turnover Intention.

Variables	Correlation (r-value)	Prob.
Age	-0.136	0.192
Monthly salary	-0.688***	0.012
Work experience	0.069	0.201

Source: Field survey, 2019  
Note: \*\*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 6:** Relationship between Leadership Style and Turnover.

Variables	Correlation (r-value)	Prob.
Relationship between leadership style and turnover	0.471***	0.000

Source: Field survey, 2019  
Note: \*\*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$

Results revealed a negatively significant relationship between monthly staff salary ( $r = -0.688$ ,  $p \leq 0.012$ ) and employee turnover. This result is in line with Akeyo and Wezel (2017), who also found out that increase in staff salaries decreases employee turnover level. This implies that employee remuneration is a vital determinant of staff retention. Regular increase in employee salary should, therefore, be a veritable strategy managers should ensure to ensure low employee turnover in their organizations (Byrnes, 2021). As indicated from the results presented in Table 6, there is a moderately positively significant association (correlation value  $r = 0.471$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), between leadership style and employee turnover in the organization.

### Effects of socioeconomic and leadership styles on employee's turnover intention

Table 7 presents the results of multiple regression analysis indicating the effects of Socioeconomic characteristics as well as leadership styles on employee's turnover intention.

**Table 7:** Effect of Leadership Style on Employee Turnover.

Variables	Coeff	t-value
<b>Age categories (base category: between 21 and 35 years)</b>		
Between 38 and 50 years	0.074**	2.04*
Above 51 years	0.122***	2.78
<b>Sex (base category: male)</b>		
Female	-0.009	-0.43
<b>Marital status (base category: single)</b>		
Married	-0.249***	-5.36*
Divorced or Widowed	-0.269***	-7.62*
<b>Educational Level (base category: PhD)</b>		
HND and BSc	0.055**	1.98
MSc and PhD	0.019	0.54
Work experience (years)	-0.006***	-0.010
Staff Designation (base category: junior staff)	-0.026	-0.452
<b>Leadership styles index</b>		
Laissez Faire	0.033**	0.036
Transactional	0.235**	0.021
Transformational	0.245	0.219
Constant	0.541***	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.471	

\*\* =  $p \leq 0.05$       \*\*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$

The estimated R-square, a measure of goodness of fit of the model, indicates that the independent variables jointly explain about 47 per cent of the variation in employee turnover in FIRO. Furthermore, a unit change in improvement towards transactional leadership will significantly ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) bring about less than proportionate change (0.235 unit) in employee turnover. In contrast, a unit improvement towards Laissez-Faire leadership style will also significantly ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) produce a less than proportional change (0.033 unit) staff turnover.

These results imply that leadership styles that significantly affect employee turnover in the study location are transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. For example, staff turnover mostly increases with transactional leadership while it was lower for the laissez-faire leadership style. These results imply that the more leaders exercise transactional styles, the more the employees' turnover. This result is consistent with Ali, *et al.* (2019), who found transactional leadership style exerts a significantly positive effect on employee turnover. Furthermore, staff who are 51 years and above have a more significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) propensity of higher turnover than those between 38 and 50 years ( $p < 0.05$ ).

This implies that staff who are 50 years and above may be predisposed to starting their private firms (being professionals), as they get near the retirement age of 65 years in a research institute of the nature being studied. Furthermore, the regression results show that married employees significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) record a negative relationship to staff turnover. This implies that marriage confers reasonable job stability in the work environment, especially if the spouses work in the same organization, vicinity, or city.

Increased work experience significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) reduces employees' turnover in the focal organization. It is expected that the higher the staff's experience in an organization, the higher the salary profile. This finding is expected since increased work experience promotes a sense of belonging to an organization and can encourage staff retention (Akeyo and Wezel, 2017).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Low employee turnover exists in FIRO, Nigeria. The laissez-faire, transformational and transactional leadership styles were mainly

practiced in the organization. Also, there is a significant relationship between organizational leadership style and employee turnover. Specifically, our results prove that the laissez-faire and transactional leadership styles significantly predispose employee turnover in FIRO. Furthermore, staff turnover was significantly reduced with increased age of staff, staff experience and marriage.

To foster reduced employee turnover, organizations should, therefore, emphasize training leaders on best practices of human management techniques regardless of the leadership style employed. Also, Leadership styles that foster employee job satisfaction and retention should be embraced. Furthermore, scaling up staff salaries should be critically investigated, to ensure workers longevity and retention in the organization.

## DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors wish to confirm that there is no conflict of interest in this paper. The manuscript has been read and gone through by all authors, and there is no misunderstanding of authorship position and roles in this paper. Furthermore, we have recognized that protection of intellectual property rights associated with this work, that there is no restriction to the publisher concerning publication of this work. Also, this work relied on human elements' interview, and as such, ethical approval by the approving body in my institution has been sought in this respect.

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