

The Dominant Leadership Style Within Guyana's Public Sector

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Abstract

This article explores the dominant leadership styles within Guyana's public sector, highlighting the interplay between the factors that shape leadership practices. The article is written based on the thesis "An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study," authored by Sven Douglas, one of the co-authors of this article. The thesis was done utilizing a mixed-methods approach; the study combined qualitative structured interviews with public sector leaders and quantitative surveys administered to a broader range of public servants. The analysis was done using statistical tools available for social sciences. These were Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Microsoft Excel. The findings reveal that the predominant leadership styles lean towards transformational and participative/democratic approaches, fostering collaboration and community engagement. However, some challenges can inhibit the effective implementation of these styles across all employees. This was evident, as many employees stated they were less motivated than their colleagues. The article also discusses the practical implications of the research, such as the need for more inclusive leadership styles, and the future direction that would serve to bridge or eliminate these gaps. By contributing to the understanding of leadership in a Guyanese context, this research aims to inform future initiatives to strengthen governance and public service delivery in Guyana.

Keywords: *Autocratic, Decision-Making, Democratic, Dominant, Guyana, Leadership, Motivation, Public Sector, Transformational.*

Introduction

Leadership plays a pivotal role in motivating employees to produce within organizations. The leaders' leadership and management styles play a crucial role in molding employee productivity, organizational culture, and the performance of the organization [5] [18]. Leadership styles encompass a range of behaviors and approaches that shape how leaders interact with their subordinates, engage in decision-making, and guide achieving organizational objectives. In the case of public sector organizations, leadership styles adopted by officials, impact beyond the internal operations; they also impact the way the public views the accountability of the government [9].

A country's public service is essential in the governance, development, and provision of goods and services to the citizens [16]. Effective leadership within this sector is vital for fostering public trust and ensuring that the public service leaders' actions reflect the government's valid will and intentions. Therefore, the adopted leadership style can significantly influence the country's progress and how the people see the government. As emphasized in many studies, good managerial and leadership practices increase employees' motivation, which would eventually lead to a high level of performance by public organizations [9].

Understanding the dominant leadership style is critical for enhancing governance practices, improving the quality of public goods and

services, and promoting sustainable development.

Previous research into public sector leadership has identified the prevalence of various leadership styles. These include transactional, transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire approaches. Each style offers unique advantages and disadvantages and impacts employees and organizations.

Guyana's public sector is complex and central to the nation's development. Like many other nations, Guyana is still transitioning from a colonial past and battling with the challenges of globalization. Leadership within Guyana's public sector is multifaceted. It shares the various prevalent leadership styles of other countries' public sectors, including autocratic, democratic, and transformational.

The case study, which was done to delve into the leadership styles of employees in Guyana's public sector, was necessary and timely since it has unique socio-political and economic challenges. As the country continues on its rapid developmental trajectory, good leadership within the public sector is critical for developing fair and equitable public policies, strong favorable and leverageable international relations, and public trust in the political leaders. Based on the case study results, it was discovered that the dominant leadership styles in Guyana's public sector are democratic and transformational. These two styles were equally supported among the respondents, gaining 40 percent each in the analysis, followed by autocratic, which only gained 20 percent of the sample. Further, based on the results of the middle and lower-level employees' response analysis, it was confirmed that as a result of how these employees are managed, their leaders, for the most part, definitely portray the attributes of democratic and transformational leadership styles.

As identified in the statement of the problem, citizens complain about receiving poor quality goods and services from many areas of

Guyana's public sector. It was noted that many of the employees were doing the bare minimum to earn their salaries. Further, when asked in confidence, the employees said they lost motivation throughout their employment. Such low levels of motivation were attributed to Guyana's public service leadership. However, the results of the research told a different story. As alluded to above, the leadership traits within Guyana's public sector are those of the leadership styles that encourage employee motivation, at least for the more significant percentage of employees.

By understanding the prevalent leadership styles and identifying the specific leadership practices that significantly impact the employees in Guyana's public sector, the research decreased the gap on the cause of the poor delivery of goods and services to the citizens of Guyana. Leadership and leadership practices are not to be blamed for this issue. Further research was recommended in order to eliminate the existing gap. There were also plausible recommendations that, if taken on board, would enhance the current working environment to one that is much more favorable and would encourage employees to produce more.

Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To understand the prevalent leadership style in Guyana's public sector.
2. To evaluate the connection between the employed dominant leadership style and employee motivation within Guyana's public sector.

Review of Literature

Leadership Theories – Overview

Leadership is a multifaceted concept that incorporates many attributes and qualities. As such, understanding the dynamics of this concept is crucial if organizations are to be successful. Good leadership enhances

organizational performance. This underscores the need for organizations to have a culture of quality leadership [14]. Many leadership styles seek to explain why leaders behave and lead the way they do and why some are more successful than others. Some of the top traits in these theories include ethics and moral standards, integrity, the ability to nurture and grow employees, and self-organizational skills, to name a few [20]. Nevertheless, a few popular and well-studied leadership styles are found in the most modern and prevalent organizations. For this article, the prevalent leadership styles found in Guyana's public sector will be examined. They are Autocratic, Democratic, and Transformational.

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic or authoritarian leadership involves total power at the leader's level. The individual controls all the decisions and working methods of the team or organization with little to no input from his team or organization members. Delegation is almost absent in this style of leadership [4].

As alluded to above, the critical features of autocratic leadership are centralized authority, little to no consultation with team members, and clear expectations conveyed through strict directives of tasks and procedures for accomplishing these tasks. This leadership style focuses on control, as the leader strictly complies with the set directives. It does have its advantages and disadvantages; however, these include speed in decision-making [4].

Efficiency is, indeed, one of the many advantages of autocratic leadership. This is especially useful in high-pressure environments where immediate action is necessary. Further to speed and efficiency, clear guidelines and roles are communicated since the team members receive them from one person. Confusion regarding authority and responsibilities is eliminated with this leadership style. Finally, but not least importantly, authoritarian leadership results in high consistency in

decisions and adherence to organizational policies. In specific industries, this is one of the most essential advantages of autocratic leadership [4].

However, the disadvantage of autocratic leadership is that it negatively affects employee morale, as team members feel undervalued and disengaged. Further, since employees have no means of contributing to the decision-making process, creativity and innovation are stifled. The organization's functioning is overly reliant on the leader, thus limiting the professional development of the subordinates [10].

Autocratic leadership is best employed in organizations where hierarchy, discipline, and rapid decision-making are crucial to the proper functioning of the organization. Such organizations include disciplined services, manufacturing, and crisis management agencies.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic or participative leadership contrasts with autocratic leadership. In this leadership style, the leader involves subordinates or team members in decision-making [12]. The key features of this leadership style include collaboration, a feedback mechanism, open communication, and a high level of participation from team members.

Democratic leaders actively seek the input of their team members. This includes their feedback on the impact of the leaders' decisions while they encourage discussions and collective problem-solving within the group [12]. Decisions are shared, as opinions from the group are weighed, and as far as possible, the group tries to reach a consensus. This encouragement of open communication and group cohesion encourages the free flow of information among members, which builds strong relationships and empowers team members to take the initiative while enhancing their sense of ownership and accountability for the work they produce [12].

This leadership style is advantageous for increased employee engagement and enhanced morale since a sense of belonging and commitment is nurtured. Diverse perspectives also result in innovative solutions. Further, the skills and confidence of the team members are developed through active discussions and inclusion in the decision-making processes. Trust and transparency are fostered, while flexibility and adaptability are easier for democratic leaders since they can be more responsive to the needs of their team [12].

Notwithstanding the many advantages, as alluded to above, the democratic leadership style has a few disadvantages. Involving team members in decision-making can be time-consuming and impossible in many situations. Within such a process in trying to reach a consensus, there is the potential for conflict, as differing opinions may lead to disagreement among team members, eventually leading to indecision and uneven participation among group members. As such, the effectiveness of this leadership style is hinged upon the leaders' abilities to manage the dynamics of the groups, including the various personalities [12].

In many cases, democratic leadership has been successful. However, success depends on the industries or situations in which they are employed. Creative industries where diverse inputs are crucial are among the situations where democratic leadership thrives. Non-profit organizations, educational settings, and research teams are also suitable for applying democratic leadership, as in these situations, there is a high demand for engagement and participation since the outcomes would be significantly enhanced through open communication, brainstorming, and vested interests in decision-making.

Transformational Leadership

With many attributes of democratic leadership, including soliciting followers' input and ideas in decision-making, the transactional leadership style underscores the inspiration and

motivation of subordinates to achieve their maximum potential and drive change within their organizations. It emphasizes the importance of vision, influence, and followers' development [19].

Transformational leaders communicate a clear and compelling vision, much to their subordinates and team members' inspiration and motivation. These members often commit to the organizations' goals and work assiduously to achieve them [19]. In this style of leadership, the individual needs and aspirations of the team members are considered by the leaders, and they are mentored and supported until they are developed into leaders. Transformational leaders encourage creativity among the team by challenging the members to innovate; change and adaptation to new circumstances are facilitated. Such an environment promotes team members' feeling of safety and responsibility for critical thinking. The team members see their transformational leaders as ethical role models with high integrity and are committed to the organization. The followers try to emulate these traits [19].

Organizations led by and with transformational leaders at the various, most influential levels tend to reap many advantages. To begin with, employee morale and motivation are boosted significantly as they feel empowered and inspired by their leaders. This results in greater team engagement as they invest more into their work, producing and performing at greater levels [19].

With the transformational leaders' emphasis on intellectual stimulation, the teams are encouraged to think creatively, which leads to innovative solutions and mass improvements within the organizations. Such actions promote positive organizational cultures supported by collaboration, trust, and ethical behavior. These attributes all encourage the followers' growth and development, eventually transforming them into the next generation of leaders [19].

Notwithstanding the abovementioned advantages, transformational leadership has

some pitfalls. When transformational leadership is applied correctly, followers tend to become overly dependent on their leaders for inspiration and guidance, which can hinder their autonomy and decision-making skills [1]. The visionary aspect of transformational leadership also affects clarity in day-to-day operations; team members may become lost in the vision instead of focusing on the immediate tasks.

The attributes of transformational leadership may not be effective in every leadership situation. Functioning in a fast-paced environment, where the decision-making cycle must be efficient in terms of time, may prove difficult for transformational leaders. As with the democratic leadership style, considering the team's inputs may slow down this process, and having a team with members who are not always willing to embrace change with short notice may result in pushback when these snap decisions are to be made.

Finally, but not necessarily least importantly, not all leaders have the qualities necessary for transformational leadership. Those not influential enough may struggle to implement their visions and/or inspire their teams [19].

Research Design

The case study to which this article refers was conducted using a mixed method, qualitative and quantitative, to investigate the influence of leadership styles on employees in Guyana's public sector. A significant benefit of this approach is that it allows the researcher to tackle the research questions from multiple perspectives and theoretical lenses, which complement each other [2]. As such, it was deemed the ideal approach for such a complex topic. The data was collected from a target population that was a mixture of Guyana's public sector employees. The sample comprised 502: 492 junior managers, supervisors, lower/unskilled staff, and ten senior managers across 19 organizations, including the discipline services. Their

selection was done using a simple random design.

Since the advantages include cost savings, rapid results, scalability, and simplicity in administering, among other advantages [6], questionnaires were used to collect all data from junior management to unskilled staff. In contrast, structured interviews were administered in person to senior management. However, because paper surveys can be more accessible than online questionnaires [7], the researcher chose to use physical questionnaires. Further, the chosen method helps to control the accuracy of the information, gain a high response rate, reduce technology bias, and build trust with the respondents, as they would see a physical person with whom they are about to share their information [15].

Ethics in data collection are essential for fostering trust, fairness and equity, privacy, and non-maleficence [11]. All ethical issues were addressed, and special attention was placed on ensuring the respondents' identities and the data collected were protected.

Validity and reliability are important for sound data and accurate results [13]. To achieve validity and reliability for the data collection tools, a pilot test was conducted, and the tools were adjusted as recommended by the pilot sample.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the statistical tools Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Microsoft Excel (MS Excel). It was also displayed using tables and pie charts. While MS Excel was used to manage the data collection tools, SPSS and ANOVA were used to analyze the data and create models based on statistics, and to compare data.

These tools were used because they offer a means of analyzing large volumes of data, with less potential to have errors than MS Excel. Further, they allow researchers to delve into

cause-and-effect relationships between variables [17] [3].

Results

The research revealed a small amount of conflict between the thoughts and responses of the senior managers, as opposed to the junior managers and below. The senior managers, perhaps, did not truly understand the impact of their leadership styles on their subordinates. It

must be noted that they all believe that leadership impacts employees' motivation. Nevertheless, based on the results of the structured interviews conducted with the senior managers willing to participate in the research, the vast majority (80 percent) believed they were democratic and transformational leaders. In comparison, a minority (20 percent) acknowledged that they were authoritarians. See table 1 and figure 1 for clarity.

Leadership Styles in Guyana's Public Sector

Table 1. Sourced from Thesis Document – An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study

Leadership Style	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Autocratic	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
Democratic	4	40.0	40.0	60.0
Transformational	4	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

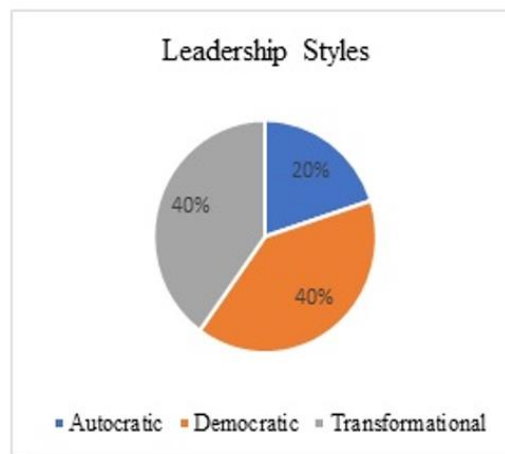


Figure 1. Sourced From Thesis Document – An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study

The respondents who admitted to being autocratic leaders were from the disciplined services. The same percentage of senior managers who stated that they subscribe to transformational and democratic leadership noted that they support involving subordinates in decision-making for the organization. All the interviewees stated that they encourage their staff to be motivated. However, they had mixed ways of motivating their staff—twenty percent of the interviewees believed in coercive measures. The other 80 percent believed that

providing a positive work environment, opportunities, discussions, encouragement, targets and flexible hours, and fair performance appraisals are the best ways to encourage employees. These responses demonstrated a dominance of democratic and transformational leadership in Guyana's public sector. As alluded to in the previous chapter, these two leadership styles usually increase employees' engagement, motivation, and performance levels.

Based on the responses from the middle management and junior staff of Guyana's public service, it was confirmed that the dominant leadership styles were indeed democratic and transformational. As the respondents' data were analyzed, it was discovered that those characteristics most attributed to democratic and transformational leadership were scored positively, with high support.

A high percentage of the junior management level respondents stated that their motivation was high. Those responses amounted to 84 percent of the entire sample; this is highlighted in table 2 and figure 2 below. As noted in the

Employees' Motivation in Current Role

Table 2. Sourced from Thesis Document – An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very	81	16.5	16.5	16.5
Fairly	200	40.7	40.7	57.1
A bit	134	27.2	27.2	84.3
Not	36	7.3	7.3	91.7
Demotivated	41	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	492	100.0	100.0	

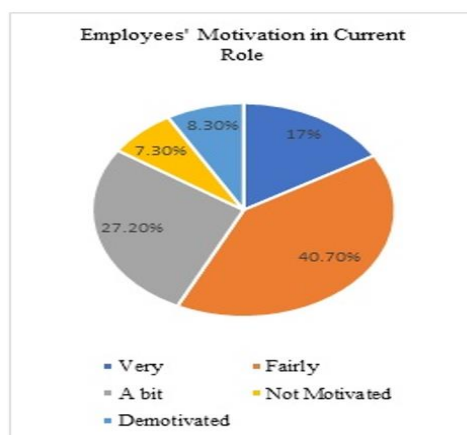


Figure 2. Sourced From Thesis Document – An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study

Many employees also stated they were involved in decision-making within their organizations. This is another attribute of the dominant leadership style identified within Guyana's public sector. As highlighted in the

literature review, transformational and democratic leadership styles result in high motivation among employees. In support of the high level of motivation among the employees in Guyana's public sector, a large percentage of respondents noted that their supervisors portray empathy in work-related pressures and issues. Empathetic leadership serves to enhance collaboration, trust, and performance. It creates a more effective team, as all team members who experience such compassion from their supervisors will develop stronger connections with their team members and leaders and have an enhanced sense of worth [8].

literature review chapter, transformational and democratic leaders include their subordinates in decision-making.

The data analysis highlighted other vital features of transformational and democratic

leadership styles that confirm that they are the dominant leadership styles in Guyana's public sector. These features include high levels of communication and transparency, attention to employees' ideas and concerns, and innovation and creativity. Further, most employees in Guyana's public sector receive timely feedback on their performance.

The analysis also highlighted that much remains desired regarding leadership improvement within Guyana's public sector. All areas mentioned that are congruent with positive leadership need to be improved, as none received 90% or above. This means that although many staff members feel the positive effects of the dominant leadership styles in Guyana's public sector, a few still do not benefit from these leadership styles. They are not as motivated as their colleagues. This requires attention, which may improve if the thesis recommendations are to be implemented.

It is acknowledged that other factors contribute to high motivation among employees. However, based on the responses, analysis of the data, and comparison with the key features of transactional and democratic leadership styles, these two styles of leadership are the dominant styles within Guyana's public sector.

Research Gaps and Future Direction

The research has a few limitations. These include the time available to collect extensive data from a broader sample, including public sector employees from around the country, considering the impact of the dominant leadership styles on job satisfaction and retention, and exploring digital leadership. These areas were, however, recommended for future research, as the results of these studies would add to the much-needed volume of knowledge on Guyana's public sector. As noted before, there is insufficient published research on leadership and its impact and influence in Guyana's public sector. This gap needs to be closed or eliminated.

Summary

Transformational and democratic leadership styles dominate Guyana's public service. However, this is only true for civilian organizations. The research participants admitted that the discipline services are led by leaders who prefer autocratic measures to achieve organizational goals.

The analysis of the data collected highlighted a dominance of the critical features of the two dominating leadership styles, including their inclusion of staff in the decision-making processes, empathy, and open communication. The research noted that 84% of Guyana's public sector employees have high levels of motivation.

Notwithstanding these positives and confirmation of the two dominant leadership styles, there is still much to be done by the leadership within the public sector of Guyana, as many employees are still not as motivated as their colleagues. However, the thesis made a few recommendations, which, if implemented, may improve the situation of leadership within Guyana's public service.

Conclusion

Previous research into public sector leadership has identified the prevalence of various leadership styles, which include transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic. However, within Guyana's public sector, transformational, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles were identified. Of these three styles of leadership, the research has discovered that the dominant leadership styles in Guyana's public sector are democratic and transformational, with autocratic leadership being the other form of leadership preferred by discipline services.

This article examines the key features of the three leadership styles within Guyana's public sector, reviews the literature, and highlights the situations where they are best employed. It also emphasizes the research design for the thesis,

which includes the target population, sample, data collection method, and ethical concerns.

Based on the research results, a high percentage of the employees within Guyana's public sector stated that their motivation is high, their supervisors portray empathy for work-related pressures and issues, and they were involved in decision-making within their respective organizations. These are all reflections of situations where the leadership styles are democratic and transformational.

Other key features of transformational and democratic leadership styles were highlighted, including high levels of communication, transparency, attention to employees' ideas and concerns, and innovation and creativity. Notwithstanding these positive, identified supporting characteristics of transformational and democratic leadership styles within Guyana's public sector, it was noted that there is a need for improvement.

Recommendations

To improve the current dominant leadership styles' effectiveness in Guyana's public sector and enhance motivation among the staff, it is highly recommended that the administration implements targeted leadership training programs for senior managers. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of transformational and democratic leadership traits.

Workshops that equip leaders with the necessary skills to better understand and adopt Emotional Intelligence in their management approaches should be regularly arranged. By encouraging a culture of empathy, a working environment that is supportive to the employees will be established. In addition, a non-coercive recognition program, or programs to celebrate

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achievements and reinforce positive attributes of employee performance, will enhance staff motivation.

Finally, implementing regular assessments and employee satisfaction surveys to track the effectiveness of leadership styles and employee motivation will facilitate necessary and useful adjustments and improvements in organizations. Leaders should be able to adapt their leadership styles based on employee feedback and the changing dynamics in the workplace to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Conflict of Interest

With reference to the publication of this manuscript, the research was conducted independently, and all efforts have been made to ensure the integrity and objectivity of the findings herein. There were no political, personal, financial or professional influencers of the findings or the outcomes of the research. Therefore, the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript's publication.

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