

# **HEADTEACHERS' VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP CHARACTER AND EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE**

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## **Abstract**

*This study titled Head Teachers' Virtuous Leadership Character and Employee Motivation in Primary Schools in Rivers State focused on the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. It was discussed that virtue forms the essence of leader's character and provide the strength for leaders to act with moral excellence. It noted that virtue is intertwined with leadership and allows the leader to function efficiently and effectively. The development of vision such as courage, empathy, transparency and efficiency among others enhance the attainment of organizations' purpose since employees will be motivated to work. The realization of the challenges in the cultivation of these virtuous character by primary school teachers form the basis for this study. In doing this, the study discussed the meaning of virtue and leadership. The problems were identified and purpose of study stated. The study is based on behavioural theory of Victor Vroom. The methodology was discussed and findings of the study also discussed in order to show the relationship between the variables.*

**Keywords:** Virtue, leadership, character, motivation

Employee motivation has been the focus of many research studies till this day. This is because motivated employees are one of the most important result of effective leadership. Furthermore, employee motivation has been the focus of educational administrators, organizational behavior experts, business, schools, and leaders alike. Abbas and Asgar (2010) opined that successful managers are also successful leaders. They influence their staff to help accomplish organizational goals. This means that leaders do not only have to motivate their workers to achieve organizational goals but must help them to accomplish their own personal and career goals as part of motivation,

since people enter into organization to achieve their personal goals while helping organization to achieve its goals.

As asserted by Vivay, (2014), motivation is a management concept used and applied by managers in organization to encourage the workers put in their best to accomplish set goals. This implies that motivation propels and directs actions within the organization for goal accomplishment. Motivating employees have been found to be the catalyst for employee performance, hence organizational success. In the views of Olusola (2011) motivation is the fundamental instrument which regulates the work behavior of employees. Motivation therefore, is that factor which encourages and boosts the action of employees towards the attainment of collective goals of the organization. In the primary school, the Head teacher is the manager, hence the leader. He is expected to motivate the employees (teachers). However, deterioration in the motivation of employees (teachers) in primary schools' organization is rampant as this is often than not exhibited through unclear vision, lack of empathy, courage and lack of transparency in dealing with employees. When these lacks are found in the school organization, staff are likely not to accomplish task. This is because these characteristics intrinsically motivate the teachers.

Intrinsic motivation as reported by Jensen (2018) while citing Newstrom and Davis (2002) is that these are internal rewards that a person feels when performing a job. To them, this type of motivation leads to an employee becoming self-motivated or propelled from within to put in their best and make valuable contribution to the attainment of organizations' goals.

Extrinsic motivators include salary increment, fringe benefits and leave allowances. However, Bullock, Strich, and Rainey (2015) noted in their survey of public and private sector employees across 30 countries to determine employee motivation factors. They found out that public sector workers are less motivated by monetary gains but social impact of their job and major motivational factor. The implication is that the head teacher who is a leader and manager of the primary school organization should understand that social aspect of motivation which is exhibited by various virtues or characteristics would go a long way to motivate the employees (teachers) to be productive. Therefore, these characteristics when exhibited drives the teachers towards commitment, task accomplishment and resourcefulness which are evidences of motivation.

### **Leadership**

Leadership is the function of a leader. It is the process of influencing the behavior of others toward accomplishing task for the achievement of organizational goal. It is a complex exercise or activity which is described in ways based on the perception and activities of the leader. A leader is that person that carries out leadership function. A leader may or may not be a manager but a manager maybe a leader. Lussier (2013), said that a leader always have the ability to influence others either negatively or

positively. In the primary school, the head teacher is a leader whose responsibility is that of getting things done through the teachers. It is this understanding that made Faisal (2017) to opined that a leader is one who get things done through others (employees). The head teacher interfaces with the government and non-governmental organizations and report back to school (the employees), maintains orderliness, discipline and sense of responsibility in the school. He is responsible for personnel services, curriculum implementation, school financial management, a supervisor and has the ability to enhance clinical and instructional supervision, coordinates the efforts of teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure that teaching and learning takes place effectively. All these cannot be achieved when the leader is not visionary, courageous, empathic and transparent.

The skills of decision-making, interpersonal relationship and technical knowledge of job when lacking endangers leadership effectiveness in the school. The school as an organization is made of up individuals and groups. People enter into organization as individuals and within the organization, they function as a group and are bounded by group decisions and rationality. Therefore, leadership involves a tripartite relationship between the individual group and the organization. This tripartite relationship is triangular in nature. The triangle is a shape that is very solid and cannot crack easily. These three-fold relationship when bounded by virtuous character enhances employee motivation.

Fig. 1

**Source: Adapted from Jesen (2018) in Lussier (2010:401)**

The figure explains the interaction or the relationship in the organization. The individual is a function of the group and the organization. Organizational and group performance influences individual performance. For example, highly motivated teachers yield high productivity hence, the individual becomes productive. This level of productivity is based on the head teacher's virtuous character.

### **Virtue**

Virtue means excellent character. In order words, virtue is attribute of good character such as courage, vision, empathy, transparency and efficiency among others. Virtue forms the essence of a leader's character. A look at the concept 'virtue' reveals that, the word comes from old French word 'vert' which means 'vigor', "moral strength" and latin Virtutem which means "high character, excellence, courage, bravery". These provide the strength for leaders to act with moral excellence. This being the case, one can say that virtue is intertwined with leadership since people point at virtue when describing ideal leader generally. The head teacher in discharging his duty exhibits these virtues. This leadership character enables him to motivate the employees which are in this paper, the teaching staff of primary schools (Mbogu, 2018). The exhibition of this character forms a part of leadership style. A transformational leader

for instance, would exhibit these characteristics because he wants things to change positively in the organization for improved productivity.

### **Head teacher and Virtuous Character**

The head teacher is the key person to exhibit virtuous character in school as a leader. This is to foster positive relationship to employees with the aim of motivating them for productivity in the school system. Lussier (2013) opined that the quality of a managers' relationship with an employee is the most powerful element of employee motivation. Head teachers with virtuous character are more likely to make teachers respond favourably to appropriate practices in the job place while those with low efficacy finds it difficult to maintain discipline among teachers, hence low productivity.

Tierkel et al (2016) noted that when sense of knowledge of right and wrong is reinforced, teachers learn harmonious relationships and avoid conflict, consequently molding positive attitudes. Exhibition of virtuous character by head teachers to foster motivation among employee is vital in the achievement of teaching and learning goals.

### **Head teachers' Vision and Employee Motivation**

Organizations' vision is an important component in the change process of the organization. Whether a teacher is implementing a new method of instructional method, strategy or process, it is the leadership that spearheads the school improvement campaign or restricting the school. The starting point for a change is vision. This is the experience of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) via the leadership of Professor Ozo-Mekure Ndimele. The hitherto docile school is very active and functionally propelled by the vision of the Vice Chancellor. Seeley (1992) defines vision as the process of restricting or a reconceptualization of an organizational roles, rules, relationship and responsibilities. Here the leader (head teacher) visualizes not just how a new program would work but how new sets of expectations, relationships, accountability, structures among others would function coherently as a whole. Furthermore, vision motivates, it inspires people to work so as to accomplish task and make it happen. Head teachers who are visionary create a common ground that facilitates or propels action towards the realization of their vision for attainment of educational goals.

### **Head teachers' Transparency and Employee Motivation**

Creating an environment of transparency where one speaks openly about school business to the teachers and make them feel comfortable speaking out their minds can do wonders for collective motivation in the school. Transparency builds trust, confidence and strength (Demer, 2015). When people understand that the head teacher is not hiding anything, and that he will pay attention to anybody, they're far more likely to respect him as an authority and as a leader. Open door policy make people feel more

appreciated, more valued and more heard. It opens line of communication and motivates the employees

### **Head teacher's Empathic Character and Employee Motivation**

The head teacher is an administrator at the primary school, whose interest is to co-ordinate the affairs and smooth running of the school. He also mediates between the welfare of his employees and the Ministry of Education. Cooper, (2004) gave a breakdown of how empathy is central to the head teacher. He maintains that empathic teachers are highly moral persons, whose responsibility is to connect themselves mentally and emotionally to the pupils and produce comparable responses in return. In view of the above the head teachers are seen as models who bring to mind morality as they discuss and associate with the pupils as well as their follow co-workers.

In another development Cooper, (2004) opines that empathic teachers are caring, loving and are highly emotional positively. That is, they always feel the way and manner in which their employees felt.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Head teachers' virtuous leadership character is a catalyst that propels or drive the employee (teachers) towards task accomplishment and attainment of education goals. Virtuous character ensures a unity of direction which motivate employees in the organization. There is need to promote virtuous character among head teachers in public primary school so as to motivate teachers to put in their best in teaching for the attainment of education goals. However, it is obvious that in public primary schools, there seems to be challenges in leadership character and how this mars or boost employee (teachers) motivation is uncertain. It is based on this premise that a study of this nature in considered to investigate the relationship between head teacher's virtuous leadership character and employee motivation. These characters include vision, transparency, courage and empathy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between head teacher's virtuous character and employee motivation. Specifically, the study was carried out to:

Find out extent of head teachers' demonstration of virtuous character and employee motivation in public primary schools.

Examine the relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation.

Find out the relationship between head teacher transparent character and employee motivation.

Investigate if head teachers' empathic character relates to employee's motivation.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

There is no significant relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation.

The relationship between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation is not significant.

There is no significant relationship between head teachers' empathic character and employee motivation

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is conceptualized around Aristotle's Theory of Virtue (384 – 322 BC) and Expectancy Theory of Motivation by Victor Vroom (1964). Most virtue ethics theories take their inspiration from Aristotle who declared that a virtuous person is someone who has ideal character traits. To Aristotle character is importantly about a state of being. Aristotelian Theory is a theory of action; this is because having the virtuous inner disposition will also involve being moved to act in accordance with them. He further said that, virtuous character is fixed, stable and reliable disposition. This means that, it is a part of personality of the individual. It is consistent and continuous. To him, it is an agent (person, leader, manager) who possesses the character trait of empathy. This person should be expected to act empathically in all sorts of situations towards all kinds of people, and over a long period of time, even when it is difficult to do so. A person with a certain character can be relied upon to act consistently over a time. In the school organization, the head teacher must focus on sets of virtuous character that will give the school its identity and help workers achieve educational goals. When virtue is demonstrated at all times in the primary school by the head teacher, this will mould the character of teachers and pupils alike, hence the relationship of this theory to the study.

Expectancy Theory by Vroom (1964) was specifically developed for work context. This theory states that employees voluntarily choose one behavior over another if they believe that the behaviour will result in the desired outcome. The implication is that if the character of the leader is pleasing to them and will help them to achieve their personal goals while having job satisfaction, they will perform highly. The Expectancy Theory Equation is

Motivational Force (MF) = Expectancy x Instrumentality x Valence

Here the character of the head teacher becomes instrumental to the valued expectation of the teachers hence accomplishment of task.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is based on the belief that head teachers' virtuous leadership character has the ability to motivate employees (teachers) to accomplish task and attain educational goals. Without virtue leaders (head teachers) make decisions that

do not benefit the employee and the organization hence the society. It is therefore the responsibilities of leader to analyze and consider appropriate decisions. Head teachers should possess characters that make their inner dispositions known to the teachers through their actions. Teachers understanding of what is expected from them by the head teacher will motivate them to put in their best to achieve educational goals.

It is also desirable that leaders focus on specific sets of virtue since there is no single list of virtue that should be used in every context, the school will have strong views on the particular aspect they judge to be most needed for the school identity. This will create a relationship between the head teacher and the teachers hence motivating them to function effectively for goal achievement.

## **Fig. 2: Conceptual Framework (2009)**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The design of this study is a descriptive survey of correlational type. The design allowed the researcher to collect data from a proportion of the population and permits generalization. Furthermore, the study looked at the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables.

#### **Population of Study**

965 public primary school head teachers in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State formed the population for study. (RSUBEB,2019)

#### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

96 public primary school head teachers which constitute 10% of head teachers in 23 local government areas of Rivers State constituted the sample of the study. To select the sample, the local government areas were grouped into four (4) strata using the stratified sampling techniques. In furtherance to that, the simple random sampling of picking and replacing was adopted to select 96 head teachers for the study. To achieve this, the researcher folded 96 papers with YES inscription on it and 869 papers with NO inscription. Those with YES were selected for the study while those with NO were not selected but all the 965 head teachers were given equal chance of being selected for the study through the technique employed.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument for this study was the researcher's designed Questionnaire entitled "Head Teacher's Virtuous Leadership Character and Employee Motivation Questionnaire (HTVLCEMQ). The instrument was divided into sections A and B. Section A comprised the Bio-Data of the respondents while section B comprise the questionnaire items that relates to the variables under study. The questionnaire was structured using Likert 4-point scale of 4 –Agree (A), 3 – Strongly Agree (SA), 2 – Disagree (D) and 1 - Strongly Disagree (SD).

### **Validity and Reliability of Instrument**

The validity of the instrument was carried out by two experts in the department of Educational Management. Based on their inputs, corrections were made and the instrument was deemed valid. In order to ascertain the reliability, a pilot study was carried out by the researcher. This was done using the test-re-test method. The questionnaire was administered on 20 selected head teachers outside the study group. The scores were recorded. After two weeks, the same questionnaire was re-administered to the same group and scores were recorded. The two sets of scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correction Co-efficient (PPMC) statistical tool at 0.05 significant level. A reliability index of 0.78 was established. Based on the result, the instrument was deemed reliable for the study.

### **Administration of Instrument**

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researcher and two assistants who were adequately trained of the issue being discussed. Out of 96 questionnaires, 80 were retrieved two weeks after administration.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the field were collected and analyzed using mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (SD) for the research questions and Person Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) for the hypotheses.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

#### **Research Question 1**

#### **Extent of head teachers' demonstration of virtuous character in public primary schools**

**Table 7.1: The Extent of Demonstration of Virtuous Character in Public Primary Schools**

S/N	Item	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Remarks
1.	I am empathic in dealing with my teachers in order to encourage them to work	3.50	0.71	H

2.	I am sincere in my dealing with my teachers	3.62	0.49	H
3.	I am consistent in my words in dealing with my teachers	3.12	0.93	H
4.	I respect the feelings of my teachers in addressing certain issues that concerns them	3.25	0.66	H
5.	I am confident when talking to my teachers about issues that relate to their job.	3.07	0.68	H
6.	I am pragmatic in dealing with issues in my school	3.42	0.65	H
7.	I appreciate the efforts of my teachers.	2.37	1.11	L
8.	I am transparent when discussing with my teachers	3.13	0.89	H
9.	I carry all my teachers along and give them a sense of belonging	2.87	0.73	L
10.	My attitude encourages my teachers to work hard to goal attainment.	3.63	0.50	H
	<b>Cumulative Mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>H</b>

Table 7.1 showed the analysis of the influence of head teachers' virtuous character in public primary schools. The result in items one to six, eight and ten showed a high influence of head teachers' virtuous character on teachers in public primary schools. The cumulative mean is 3.20 indicates that there is high extent of head teachers' demonstration of virtuous character in public primary schools

### Testing of Null Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation**

**Table 7.2: Summary of PPMC Significant Relationship between Head Teachers' Visionary Character and Employee Motivation**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum y$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r <sub>cal</sub>	df	r <sub>crit</sub>	Decision
Head teachers' visionary character	1169		3507		3752	0.99	96	0.139	reject null hypothesis
Employee Motivation		1346		4570					

### Significant @ .05 level

The result from Table 7.2 showed the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation in public primary school. The result of the analysis showed an r-value of 0.99. This indicated that head teachers' visionary character has a very high positively relationship with the employee motivation in public primary school. The result also showed that at 96 degree of freedom and .05 alpha level, the critical r value from tables was 0.139. Since the r<sub>cal</sub> is greater than the r<sub>crit</sub>, the null hypothesis is

rejected. Thus, there was a significant relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation in public primary school

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationships between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation**

**Table 7.3: Summary of PPMC Significant Relationship between Head Teachers' Transparency Character and Employee Motivation**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum y$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	$r_{cal}$	df	$r_{crit}$	Decision
head teachers' transparency character	1027		2663		3123	0.57	96	0.139	reject null hypothesis
Employee Motivation		1278		4086					

**Significant @ .05 level**

The result from Table 7.3 showed the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation in public primary school. The result of the analysis showed an r-value of 0.57, indicating a positive relationship to between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation in public primary school. The result further indicates that at 96 degree of freedom and .05 alpha level, the critical r value from tables is 0.139. Since the  $r_{cal}$  is greater than the  $r_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was a significant correlation between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation in public primary school

**Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationships between head teachers' empathic character and employee motivation**

**Table 7.4: Summary of PPMC Significant Relationship between Head Teachers' Empathic Character and Employee Motivation**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum y$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	$r_{cal}$	df	$r_{crit}$	Decision
head teachers' transparency character	1029		2625		3381	0.48	96	0.139	reject null hypothesis
Employee Motivation		1407		4893					

**Significant @ .05 level**

Summary of result in Table 7.4 indicated that that the correlation index (r) is 0.48 indicating a positive relationship between head teachers' empathic character and employee motivation in public primary school. This means that empathic character has a positive relationship to employee motivation. The result also reveals that at 96 degree of freedom and .05 level, the critical r value from tables is 0.139. Since the  $r_{cal}$  is greater than the  $r_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship

between head teachers' empathic character and employee motivation in public primary school

### **Summary of findings**

The following were the findings of this study:

Responses to question one revealed head teacher's demonstration of virtuous character influence employee motivation in public primary schools

There was a significant correlation between head teacher's visionary character and employee motivation in public primary schools

There was a significant relationship between head teacher's transparency character and employee motivation in public primary schools

There was no significant relationship between head teacher's empathic character and employee motivation in public primary schools

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Relationships between head teacher's visionary character and employee motivation in public primary school**

Since the  $r_{cal}$  is greater than the  $r_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there was a significant relationship between head teachers' visionary character and employee motivation in public primary school

The finding of the study is in consonance with the findings of Seeley (1992) who defined vision as the process of restricting or a reconceptualization of an organizational roles, rules, relationship and responsibilities. Here, he stressed that leader (head teacher) visualizes not just how a new program would work but how new sets of expectations, relationships, accountability, structures among others would function coherently as a whole. He added that, vision motivates, it inspires people to work so as to accomplish task and make it happen. Therefore, head teachers who are visionary creates a common ground that facilitates or promote actions towards the realization of their vision for attainment of educational goals.

#### **Relationship between head teacher's transparency character and employee motivation in public primary school**

Since the  $r_{cal}$  is greater than the  $r_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was a significant correlation between head teachers' transparency character and employee motivation in public primary school

This finding is in agreement with the views of Demer, (2015) who opined creating an environment of transparency where one speaks openly about school business to the teachers and make them feel comfortable speaking out their minds can do wonders for collective motivation in the school. Transparency builds trust, confidence and strength. He further stressed that when people understand that you are not hiding anything, and that you will pay attention to anybody, they're far more likely to respect you as an

authority and appreciate you as a leader. He added that open door policy make people feel more appreciated, more valued and more heard it open line of communication and motivate.

### **Relationship between head teacher's empathic character and employee motivation in public primary school**

Since the  $r_{cal}$  is greater than the  $r_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between head teachers' empathic character and employee motivation in public primary school

This finding corroborated the findings of Cooper, 2004 who gave a breakdown of how empathy is central to the head teacher. He maintained that empathic teachers are highly moral persons, whose responsibility is to connect themselves mentally and emotionally to the pupils and produce comparable responses in return. In another development Cooper, (2004) opined that empathic teachers are, caring, loving and are highly emotional positively. That is, they always feel the way and manner in which their employees felt. In view of the above the head teacher are seen as models who bring to mind morality as they discuss and associate with the pupils as well as their follow co-workers.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that there is a relationship, a significant one between head teachers' virtuous character and employee motivation. Head teachers should demonstrate virtuous character in dealing with staff and in decision making so that the teachers would be motivated to work to accomplish goals.

### **Recommendation**

The recommends that that there is need for awareness on the value of virtue on the identity of the school so that teachers will be motivated to perform their job.

Head teachers should be trained on how to motivate teachers in their primary school.

Head teachers should be confident, brave, empathetic among others so that teachers can follow suit and train the pupils.

Finally, there is still need for more study to be carried out by researchers on head teachers' virtuous leadership character and employee motivation in primary schools

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