



Heads of Department Micromanagement Behaviours and Lecturers Performance in Public Universities in Rivers State

¹Nwanosike, Victoria Adaeze, ²Dr. I. F. Jack, ³Professor G. G. Kpee

¹Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria Victorianwanosike1@gmail.com

²Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria Florencejack539@gamil.com

³Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria gospelkpee@uniport.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study examined Heads of Department micromanagement behaviours and lecturers performance in Public Universities in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided this study. The study adopted the descriptive design. The population of the study was 2,815 lecturers in the three public universities in Rivers State. The sample was 500 lecturers drawn from the three public universities in the state. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. A validated self-structured 12-item questionnaire was used to generate data for the study. The Cronbach's alpha was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the instrument at 0.90. The research questions were answered using mean, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant level using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The study revealed that the use of autocratic actions by HODs in decision making processes does not enhance lecturers' productivity in public universities in Rivers State. The study also showed that criticisms by HODs enhanced lecturers' productivity. This study recommended that HODs should improve overall productivity of lecturers by creating a more conducive, collaborative and inclusive approach to leadership. The HODs should encourage open communication, shared decision-making, and a greater degree of autonomy among lecturers to enhance their performance. This study also recommended that university leadership should encourage HODs and academic leaders to promote a culture of constructive criticism within their departments. This means creating an environment where feedback is seen as a means for growth and improvement rather than mere fault-finding. Regular feedback sessions should be open, respectful, and focused on professional development.

Keywords: Micromanagement behaviours, HODs, lecturers, performance, university, Rivers State

Introduction

Micromanagement is a word used to describe a particular leadership style in organisations whereby a manager's behaviour is characterized by excessive supervision and autocratic control of employees' work process, limited delegation of task to staff, unreasonable criticisms and so on. Managers are supposed to notice their employees' work activities, correct and guide them as needed. However, the time spent demonstrating each task to staff will gradually eat into the time allocated to other activities. Micromanagement can eat into time better spent addressing corporate requirements and serving clients' requests, whether it occurs in a production-oriented or service oriented work environment. Martin and Armstrong (2019) states that micromanagement behaviours normally occurs when a manager believes that he is in charge, and that only him or her can bring new ideas to the organization. Such a discouraging behaviours is not limited to new managers alone, as there are some line-staff who are also diehard micromanagers. Such people watch things 'extra closely' as they are 'highly' confident about their capabilities and capacities. Micromanagement has various dimensions or behavioural manifestations ranging from scrutiny, criticism, strict supervision, unreasonable insistence to autocratic actions.

In university context, micromanagement is largely viewed as a negative leadership approach (Mayhew, 2020), even though it is could be useful in many occasions to drive performance (Brown & Davis, 2019). Lecturers are key stakeholders in the academic ecosystem, and thus play a pivotal role in shaping the overall performance and reputation of a university. Universities count on their lecturers to achieve the mission and goals of the university. For lecturers to actively contribute to the success of the university, they have to participate and make their own contributions during decision making processes that affect the university. Different scholars have written on employees participation; some believe that participation will make the institutions more productive and competitive (Greenberg, 2011). In universities where the lecturers are often ignored by Heads of Department (HODs) in decision-making processes, the quality of work performance of such lecturers may be impacted negatively (Nwamadi & Ogbonna, 2020). Such HODs may be regarded autocratic leaders or micromanagers.

Assertive and autocratic actions of superiors may improve lecturers' productivity (Kyvik, 2017). Whether micromanagement and its behavioural manifestation such as autocratic actions can consistently improve employees' performance has generated debate within the academic community. Some scholars have argued that a strict top-down approach can lead to increased productivity among lecturers (Northouse, 2018; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Greenberg (2011) states that employee participation in decision making has been acknowledged as a managerial tool for organizational performance,

adding that participatory decision making fosters understanding for shared responsibility for the attainment of institutional goals. This is actualized by allowing workers contribution in developing the establishing policies and procedures. Employee participation in decision making has become an important topic in human resource management (HRM) and is regarded as one of the driving tools of employee voice, which many management scholars have observed to be a growing management concept. At the centre of the definition of the concept of participation, empowerment and employee involvement is the concept of decision-making.

In the university system constructive criticism is one thing that is predominant. It is used for correction, and the intention should be to achieve productivity. Criticism according to Oxford learners Cambridge Dictionary (2023) is the expression of disapproval of someone or something on the basis of perceived faults or mistakes.

Criticism plays a crucial role in enhancing lecturers' productivity by providing valuable feedback and fostering continuous improvement. Constructive criticism, when delivered thoughtfully, serves as a catalyst for professional growth and development. According to Hattie and Timperley (2016), feedback is most effective when it addresses specific aspects of performance, highlights areas for improvement, and offers actionable suggestions. Destructive criticisms on the other hand can also occur at any level of an organization. Receiving destructive criticism can make an individual or a team feel attacked, judged, and angry. In a professional environment, it can quickly spiral into workplace conflict and bullying (Eisenbeiss et al., 2018). However, criticisms by superiors, when delivered constructively, can lead to increased productivity and improvement among university teachers in an academic context. This feedback can motivate teachers to enhance their teaching methods, engage in professional development, and maintain accountability for delivering high-quality education.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, management style has posed a significant challenge to the development and sustainability of organisations. Various managers employ different methods to oversee personnel and material resources within their control. One such managerial approach, known as micromanagement, has been in practice for many years. Employees under micromanagers frequently observe that their managers seem more authoritarian and dictatorial rather than supportive and cooperative, and these behaviours impact negatively on their performance and overall productivity. Nevertheless, managers frequently argue that employees tend to only show superficial dedication when the manager is present, suggesting that true commitment is often lacking. Over time, the persistence of this pattern and argument has impacted the relationship between managers and staff, thereby influencing productivity. This concern prompted the researchers to conduct this study. In workplaces where managers exhibit more authoritarian and controlling behaviours rather than being supportive, employees typically respond unfavourably, resulting in increased organizational challenges. Initial observations indicated the presence of micromanagement across different levels of administration in Universities in Port Harcourt. This inference is drawn from the complaints and discussions among employees. The existing circumstance poses challenges to the advancement and progress of both lecturers and students, and thus capable of hindering the standard of academic intellectualism from flourishing. Consequently, this study's objective is to investigate the Heads of Department micromanagement behaviours and lecturers performance in public universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- In what ways do Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State?
- In what ways do Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant level.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design of this study was descriptive. The population of the study was 2,815 lecturers in the three public universities in Rivers State. The three public universities are University of Port Harcourt (UPH), Rivers State University (UST) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). The distribution of the population indicates that University of Port Harcourt (UPH) shared 1,408, Rivers State University (UST) was 731, while Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) has 676. A sample size of 500 lecturers was selected for the study, representing 17.76% of the population and this satisfied Yamane (1962) sampling requirement. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The total of 500 respondents was grouped into

three groups in correspondence to three public universities in the state. Two hundred (200) respondents were selected from UPH, while 160 respondents were randomly drawn from UST. Furthermore, 140 respondents were selected randomly from IAUE.

The instrument used to generate data was a self-structured 12-item questionnaire titled "Heads of Department Micromanagement Behaviours and Lecturers Performance Questionnaire' (HDMBLPQ)". The instrument was divided into two sections, namely, Section A and Section B. Items in section A was used to generate data on demographic variables of the respondents. Section B contained items that assessed the basic variables that this study is investigating. The four-point modified Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Agree (1 point) was used to scale the responses of the respondents. The instrument was well-validated by the researchers. It was further tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, and 0.94 and 0.85 indexes was obtained for each of the two clusters. The entire 500 copies of the instrument was issued to respondents, but only 492 copies were properly completed, retrieved and used in data analysis, representing 98.4% retrieval rate. The research questions were answered using mean and standard, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the two (2) hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Items with mean score of $\bar{x} \geq 2.50$ criterion were accepted whereas those that scored below the criterion were rejected.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One: In what ways do Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean assessment of the respondents on the ways do Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State

S/N	Description of Items	Means of Lecturers								
		UPH (n = 194)			RSU (n = 158)			IAUE (n = 140)		
		\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark	\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark	\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark
1	Swift decision-making ability of HOD helps to eliminate the need for lengthy consultations in time-sensitive situations in the department.	2.51	0.76	Agreed	2.59	0.76	Agreed	2.60	0.77	Agreed
2	HODs often provide clear and unambiguous instructions to lecturers thereby enhancing their understanding of their tasks for effective performance.	2.96	0.89	Agreed	2.70	0.93	Agreed	2.52	0.99	Agreed
3	HODs usually use authoritative fiat to ensure efficient resource allocation to where they are most needed.	2.16	0.82	Disagreed	2.74	0.74	Agreed	2.61	0.69	Agreed
4	HODs use their authority to hold lecturers accountable for their performance.	2.51	0.91	Agreed	2.73	0.85	Agreed	2.56	0.60	Agreed
5	HODs take decisive actions to address issues promptly before they deteriorate.	3.10	0.90	Agreed	2.87	0.69	Agreed	2.80	0.92	Agreed
6	HODs autocratic actions promote job satisfaction among the lecturers, thereby improving their performance.	1.42	0.49	Disagreed	1.49	0.83	Disagreed	1.53	0.81	Disagreed
Aggregate Mean		2.44	0.80		2.52	0.80		2.44	0.80	

In table 1 above, respondents in UPH, RSU and IAUE agreed on the statements in items 1, 2, 4 and 5, with mean scores of 2.51, 2.59 and 2.60 for item 1; 2.96, 2.70 and 2.52 for item 2; 2.51, 2.74, and 2.56 for item 4; and 3.10, 2.87 and 2.80 in item 5 respectively. Conversely, the statement in item 6 was disagreed on by the various categories of the respondents, resulting in mean cores of 1.42, 1.49 and 1.53 for UPH, RSU and IAUE respectively. The aggregate mean assessments of $2.47 (2.44 + 2.52 + 2.44 = 7.40/3)$ is lower than the criterion mean of 2.50, and therefore suggests that the deployment of autocratic actions by HODs in decision making processes in the department did not enhance lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: In what ways do Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean assessment of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State

S/N	Description of Items	Means of Lecturers								
		UPH (n = 194)			RSU (n = 158)			IAUE (n = 140)		
		\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark	\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark	\bar{X}	S.D.	Remark
7	Constructive criticism provides lecturers with valuable feedback on their teaching methods, materials, and performance.	3.34	0.62	Agreed	3.12	0.66	Agreed	2.98	0.54	Agreed
8	Constant criticisms by HOD often strengthen lecturers' self-confidence for work higher performance.	2.26	0.49	Disagreed	2.41	0.84	Disagreed	2.30	0.87	Disagreed
9	Critiques from HODs usually help to hold lecturers accountable for their responsibilities.	2.80	0.58	Agreed	2.65	0.63	Agreed	2.90	0.67	Agreed
10	Regular criticisms by HODs help in making lecturers to increase their performance sustainably.	2.38	0.86	Disagreed	2.28	0.96	Disagreed	2.48	0.89	Disagreed
11	Constructive criticism often motivate lecturers to strive for excellence in their work	2.36	0.78	Disagreed	2.43	0.72	Disagreed	2.17	0.76	Disagreed
12	Consistent criticisms of lecturers by HOD help to reduce mistakes on the part of lecturers, thereby enhancing their productivity.	2.52	0.71	Agreed	2.49	0.73	Disagreed	2.46	0.77	Disagreed
Aggregate Mean		2.61	0.67		2.56	0.76		2.55	0.75	

In table 2 above, respondents in UPH, RSU and IAUE agreed on the statements in items 7 and 9, with mean scores of 3.34, 3.12 and 2.98 for item 7, and 2.80, 2.65, and 2.90 for item 9 respectively. However, the statements in items 8, 10 and 11 were disagreed on by the various categories of the respondents, resulting in mean cores of 2.26, 2.41 and 1.30 for item 8; 2.38, 2.28, and 2.48 for item 10; and 2.36, 2.43, and 2.17 for item 11 respectively and in correspondence to UPH, RSU and IAUE respectively. The aggregate mean assessments of 2.57 ($2.61+2.56+2.55=7.72/3$) is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, and therefore implies that criticisms by HODs enhanced lecturers' productivity in public universities in Port Harcourt Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4.1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	1.170	2	.585	.667	.100
Within Groups	171.604	489	.351		
Total	172.774	491			

The result shown in table 3 showed that at a total of 491 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level, the F-value obtained was 0.585. Since the p-value of 0.00 is greater than 0.05 significant level, it is therefore established that no significant difference exist among the mean assessments of the various categories of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State. Given this result, the above stated null hypothesis is accepted.

Null Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4.1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	77.332	2	2.517	4.487	.013
Within Groups	188.603	489	.561		
Total	265.935	491			

The result shown in table 4.1 reveals that at a total of 491 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level, the F-value obtained was 4.487. Since the p-value of 0.013 is less than 0.05 significant level, it is therefore established that significant difference exist among the mean assessments of the various categories of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State. In this light, the above stated null hypothesis is rejected, and thus implies that at least a mean score of the responses of one of the categories of the respondents is statistically different from others. A Post Hoc test conducted is presented below.

Post Hoc Test

Table 4.2: Post Hoc Test on Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference between the mean assessments of the respondents on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State (Tukey Honest Significant Difference [HSD])

(I) Universities	(J) Universities	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	P-value
UPH	UST	-1.04814*	.36509	.014
	IAUE	-.85807*	.23604	.002
UST	UPH	1.06814*	.36509	.014
	IAUE	.17007	.29212	.800
IAUE	UPH	.84807*	.23604	.002
	UST	-.17007	.29212	.800

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In table 4.2 above, the comparison of the means assessments of UPH, UST and IAUE showed that a significant difference exists between the responses of lecturers in UPH and UST. This is because the mean difference of -1.04814* obtained at p-value of 0.014 in the first row of the table, is less than 0.05 significance level. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.002 obtained in the comparison of mean assessments of UPH and IAUE in the same first row shows that a significant difference exist between their respective mean values at 0.05 significance level. In addition, in the second row, from the left, the mean comparison between UST and IAUE yielded a mean difference of .17007 at a p-value of 0.00, which is significant at 0.05 level, and thus establishes that a significant difference exist between the means assessments of UST and IAUE on the ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State.

Findings and Discussion

Ways Heads of Departments deploy autocratic actions in decision making for enhancing lecturers productivity in Public universities in Rivers State

This study showed that the use of autocratic actions by HODs in decision making processes does not enhance lecturers' productivity in public universities in Rivers State. The reason for these findings is because the deployment of autocratic actions and use authoritative fiat to ensure efficient resource allocation fails to achieve the intended results, and also failed to promote job satisfaction among the lecturers, which is a crucial factor in promoting collaboration and high productivity. Autocratic actions in a workplace, characterized by a top-down management style where leaders make decisions without much input from employees, have been empirically linked to demotivation, disengagement, and low productivity. Research conducted by Judge and Bono (2001) found that when employees perceive a lack of autonomy and control over their work, they tend to experience reduced motivation and engagement. Autocratic leadership can stifle employees' intrinsic motivation to excel and contribute their best efforts to the organization, as they feel disempowered and undervalued (Deci et al., 2020). Moreover, this lack of autonomy often results in a decrease in job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions, both of which negatively impact overall productivity (Eisenbeiss et al., 2018).

This restrictive approach hampers the free flow of innovative ideas and solutions. Additionally, autocratic actions can create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among employees, hindering their willingness to take risks or propose new, creative initiatives (Anderson & Mano-Negrin (2015). Consequently, this not only stifles innovation but also leads to low morale and reduced job satisfaction. Such an environment is far from conducive to productivity, as it limits employees' enthusiasm and engagement in their work (Hattie & Timperley, 2018). Therefore, empirical evidence suggests that autocratic actions have a detrimental impact on creativity, innovation, and overall productivity, emphasizing the importance of more inclusive and participatory leadership styles to foster a more dynamic and effective work environment.

Ways Heads of Departments criticisms enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State

This study also showed that Criticisms by Heads of Departments (HODs) enhanced lecturers' productivity in public universities in Port Harcourt Rivers State. The reason behind this finding is because constructive criticism provides lecturers with valuable feedback on their teaching methods, materials, and performance and helps to hold lecturers accountable for their responsibilities. These findings suggest that criticisms by HODs can have a constructive impact on enhancing lecturers' productivity. Research has shown that constructive feedback and criticisms, when provided in a supportive and developmental manner, can lead to improvements in teaching and research activities among academics (Hattie & Timperley, 2018). When HODs offer specific and evidence-based critiques, it enables lecturers to identify areas for improvement, refine their teaching methods, and enhance the quality of their research. Additionally, criticisms can motivate lecturers to set higher standards for themselves, thus driving increased productivity and a commitment to professional growth. These findings underscore the significance of feedback from HODs as a valuable tool for fostering continuous improvement in the academic environment. Feedback that identifies areas for improvement can motivate lecturers to strive for excellence. Lecturers may feel a sense of responsibility to meet the expectations and standards set by their department (Jongbloed et al., 2016). Criticisms by Heads of Departments (HODs) can potentially enhance the motivation and productivity of lecturers, as they provide valuable feedback and a sense of accountability.

A study conducted by Johnson and Smith (2019) found that regular feedback and constructive criticism from department heads positively influenced lecturers' performance, leading to improved teaching outcomes and a heightened focus on quality assurance. In this context, criticisms, when delivered constructively, act as a catalyst for accountability and continuous enhancement of lecturers' productivity, ultimately benefiting the overall educational experience.

Conclusion

This study investigated Heads of Department micromanagement behaviours and lecturers performance in public universities in Rivers State. Based on the findings, this study concludes that criticisms of HODs enhance lecturers' productivity in Public universities in Rivers State. Furthermore, this further concludes that the use of autocratic actions by HODs do not enhance lecturers' productivity in public universities in Port Harcourt Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made by the researchers.

1. HODs should improve overall productivity of lecturers by creating a more conducive, collaborative and inclusive approach to leadership. He/she should encourage open communication, shared decision-making, and a greater degree of autonomy among lecturers to enhance their performance.
2. University leadership should encourage HODs and academic leaders to promote a culture of constructive criticism within their departments. This means creating an environment where feedback is seen as a means for growth and improvement rather than mere fault-finding. Regular feedback sessions should be open, respectful, and focused on professional development.

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