

## LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN RADIODIAGNOSIS: A RADIOGRAPHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

**Background:** The claims of superiority by physicians, who are the main professionals appointed in key leadership positions, over other health professionals have caused conflicts in the Nigerian health sector. These conflicts are experienced in all units of the hospital of which Radiodiagnostic unit is one of them.

**Objectives:** This study sets to examine the impact of leadership styles on cognitive and relational conflict types in Radiodiagnosis.

**Method:** Short form of multifactor leadership questionnaire was adopted for the this survey. Statements on cognitive and relational conflicts were also adopted. Leadership styles were studied in their components. This survey was carried out among 32 Radiographers in a tertiary health institution in south eastern Nigerian. Data was analysed using SPSS version 17 to determine percentages of responses and Pearson's correlation between study variables.

**Results:** Inspirational leadership component of transformational leadership scored the highest positive (90.2%) response. Management by exception (passive) component of transactional leadership style scored the least positive (32.3%) response. Between the conflict types studied, cognitive conflict scored highest positive (50%) score. Pearson's correlation between components of leadership styles and conflict types shows that laissez faire type of leadership is significantly correlated with relational conflict.

**Conclusion:** Transformational leadership style is most practiced in Radiodiagnosis. However, this type of leadership style does not foster conflict therefore, the conflict experienced in Nigerian may not entirely be a leadership issue.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Radiodiagnosis, conflict, multifactor questionnaire.

### Introduction

The healthcare sector is complex; heterogeneous in terms of staff composition and it is conflict prone. Radiodiagnostic unit is no exception. Radiodiagnostic services is inherently interdisciplinary; it requires Radiographers, Radiologist, Nurses and clerical staff to work in teams [1][2]. Managing conflict in the workplace is a time-consuming necessary task for the physician leader. Inter and intra professional conflicts may arise among health care professionals that constitutes Radiodiagnostic unit [3]. The

conflicts may range from disagreements to major controversies that may lead to litigation or violence. Conflicts have an adverse effect on productivity, morale, and patient care. They may certainly limit staff contributions and impede efficiency [3]. Leaders can impact their subordinates in three different ways; by involving in a conflict themselves, acting as an arbitrator to get a pat impasse between people that are involved in a conflict and through their leadership style [4]. However, impact of

workplace conflict via leadership style is the scope that will be covered in this study.

Professionals in Radiodiagnostic unit are under the leadership of physicians in the unit. In Nigeria, healthcare professionals do not collaborate well because of the claim of superiority crisis within Nigerian health sector [5]. This has often resulted in professional conflict which, is threatening to tear the health sector apart to the detriment of the patients [5]. These conflicts are more proximal in units where different professionals work together daily. Radiodiagnosis unit is no exception. It is then imperative to find out how different leadership styles affects conflict management in Radiodiagnosis since, [6] opined that leadership style impacts conflict management. This study sets to determine the relationship between leadership styles and conflict in Radiodiagnosis. The results will serve as a reference article for workshop and future research.

Three types of leadership styles were considered in this study. These are: transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership styles. They were studied in their comprising components.

Transformational leadership components are idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Idealized influence leaders lead by examples and who go beyond their personal interests for the good of the organization [7]. Inspirational motivation characteristics of leaders help to transmit a clear and inspiring vision to their employees [8]. When the subordinates are inspired, it motivates them by giving challenge and purpose to their work. Through intellectual stimulation, the leaders help their subordinates to discover their creativity [9]. This helps subordinates test new approaches and ideas towards work. Finally, by individualized consideration, leaders are sensitive to the needs of each of their

subordinates and hence treat them on individual levels [4].

Contingent reward and management by exception (active and passive) are components of transactional leadership style. Through contingent reward a leader clearly communicates tasks to be accomplished and the ensuing reward to subordinate who accomplishes them [10]. These rewards help subordinates to adopt the right behaviors and exert efforts toward achieving desirable results. Management by exception (active and passive) do not focus on the positive results achieved by subordinates, rather, it emphasizes their mistakes and shortcomings. While the active dimension refers to a leader who scrutinizes the results of his subordinates and reprimands them as soon as they fall short of standards [6], the passive dimension represents a supervisor that will wait for problems to become serious before rectifying the situation [4]

Laissez faire leadership style has no component. It is characterized by leaders who show relative lack of concern for subordinates [6]. This leadership style is exhibited by leaders who avoids taking decision and hence, avoids management responsibilities.

Cognitive conflict refers to difference in the goals, objectives and means of achieving them among workers in a workplace. It can be tagged as interest conflict and/or task conflict. On the other hand, relational conflict is emotional and behavioural in nature. Relational conflict leads to strain in communication and hostility among workers in an establishment [4].

The impact of these conflict types on leadership in Radiodiagnostic unit has not been documented. This study sets to provide this empirical document. The results will serve as a reference article for workshop and future research.

### **Materials and Method**

This is a prospective cross-sectional study carried out among Radiographers in a tertiary health institution in Anambra State Nigeria. An informed consent was gotten from the participants. Convenient sampling method was adopted while enlisting the participants. A short form of multifactor questionnaire by Bass and Avolio was adopted [4]. It was used to assess leadership style. Statements on relational and cognitive conflict types were adopted from the work of [4] to the questionnaire to assess conflict. Three leadership styles via transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership styles were studied. Transformational and transactional leadership style was studied in their individual components. Components of transformational leadership style studied were idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Components of transactional leadership studied were contingent reward, management by exception (active) and management by exception (passive). Laissez faire leadership style has no component. Cognitive and relational conflict types were assessed. Questionnaires were administered to 32 Radiographers, who gave their consent in the study area. Score of 70% – 100% will be termed excellent. Scores of 69% - 50% will be termed good while scores of 49%-0% will be termed poor.

Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 to determine the percentages of responses and Pearson's correlation between studied variables. A p-value of 0.05 was adopted as a criterion for the level of significance.

### **Results**

Thirty-two questionnaires were administered but thirty were recovered making it a response rate of 94%.

From table 1, the components of transformational leadership style scored highest positive percentage responses while that of laissez faire style scored the least positive responses. Relational conflict shows poor occurrence among employees in the study area while occurrence of cognitive conflict is on the average (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that significant correlation exists between laissez faire leadership style and relational nature of conflict. However, there is very weak non-significant correlation between laissez faire leadership style and cognitive conflict type. Inspirational motivation and contingent reward show weak negative correlation with both cognitive and relational conflict. Other components of transformational and transactional leadership styles show weak non-significant correlation with both cognitive and relational nature of workplace conflict.

**Table 1:** Ratings of studied leadership components in percentage.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Idealized influence.</b>	73.6	19.3	7.1
<b>Inspirational motivation</b>	90.2	6.7	3.1
<b>Intellectual stimulation</b>	74.4	13.7	7.9
<b>Individualized consideration</b>	72.7	14.1	13.1
<b>Contingent reward.</b>	75.4	14.2	10.4
<b>Management by exception (active).</b>	50.2	19.3	30.5
<b>Management by exception (passive).</b>	32.3	13.8	53.8
<b>Laissez faire</b>	31.2	35.1	33.8
<b>Cognitive conflict.</b>	50	21.4	28.6
<b>Relational conflict.</b>	31.6	34.6	33.8

**Table 2:** Correlation of leadership style components with conflict types.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cognitive conflict.</b>	<b>Relational conflict.</b>
<b>Idealized influence.</b>	r= 0.270; p=0.150	r=0.151; p=0.427
<b>Inspirational motivation.</b>	r= -0.161; p=0.395	r=-0.039; p=0.838
<b>Intellectual stimulation.</b>	r= 0.264; p=0.159	r=0.122; p=0.522
<b>Individualized consideration.</b>	r= 0.031; p=0.871	r=0.021; p=0.912
<b>Contingent reward.</b>	r=-0.135; p=0.477	r=-0.285; p=0.128
<b>Management by exception (active).</b>	r= 0.030; p=0.875	r=0.184; p=0.331
<b>Management by exception (passive).</b>	r= 0.008; p=0.966	r=0.070; p=0.713
<b>Laissez faire.</b>	r= 0.005; p= 0.980	r=0.435; p=0.016

r- Coefficient of correlation \*p- level of significance.

### Discussion

This study was carried out to examine the impact of leadership styles on cognitive and relational conflict in a tertiary health institution in Nigeria from Radiographer's perspective. This study was carried out among Radiographers in Radiodiagnostic unit, where a physician is the head of department. Noteworthy, Nigerian health sector is crisis prone at all levels so this study examined the impact of leadership style of a rival professional on some conflict types. The result of this study affirms the results of a previous study by [11] in the same study area, that leaders in Radiodiagnosis practice more of transformational leadership style. Noteworthy, leadership styles were assessed as a whole in the work by [11] while it was studied in its various components in the present study.

The correlation between different components of leadership styles studied shows that only laissez faire leadership style has a significant relationship with relational conflict. This shows that Radiology leaders who practice laissez faire leadership style will foster relational conflict in workplace. Fortunately, leaders in the study area practice poor level of laissez faire leadership style. Laissez faire leadership style does not have a significant relationship with cognitive conflict. The result of this study disagrees

with a study by [4]. They also studied the individual components of leadership styles and reported that laissez faire leadership style do not influence relational conflict. However, the study by [4] agrees with the present study regarding correlation between laissez faire leadership behaviour and cognitive conflict. From the results of this present study, leaders exhibit less of laissez-faire type of leadership which, has no or little negative impact on conflict as reported by [4][12][13].

The components of transformational leadership style do not have significant relationship with neither cognitive nor relational conflict as such, do not foster conflict. The report of this study is in tandem with the reports of [4] and [8]. These authors explained that challenging subordinates to find new ways of doing things instead of the usual way may create confusion amongst subordinates which can lead to high perception of conflict as change is usually resisted. According to [14], transformational leaders could foster cognitive conflict. This opinion disagrees with the results of this study as no significant relationship exists between components of transformational leadership and either of the studied conflict types. However, the weak correlation between components of transformational leadership and the studied conflict types cannot be overlooked.

The practice of transactional leadership behaviour is next to that of transformational leadership as discovered by this study. In this study, there is no significant relationship between components of transactional leadership style and studied conflict types. Based on this result, transactional leadership does not significantly foster cognitive and relational conflict in Radiodiagnosis. Contrary to the result of this study, [4] reported that transactional leadership style fosters lasting conflict which alternates between relational and cognitive conflict. Inspirational motivation and contingent reward has a very weak negative relationship with both cognitive and relational conflict. This shows that as leaders practice inspirational motivation and contingent reward components of transactional leadership, cognitive and relational conflict are fostered less and vice versa. Also [1] found that inspirational motivation has a negative relationship with cognitive conflict. From the results of correlation, transformational leadership reduces more of cognitive conflict while transactional leadership reduces more of relational conflict in Radiodiagnosis. Laissez faire leadership style reduces cognitive conflict and foster relational conflict in the study area. To contain relational and cognitive conflict types, it is then advised to practice all forms of leadership styles.

### **Conclusion**

The conflict noted in Radiodiagnosis is not associated with transformational leadership which, is the most practiced leadership style in Radiodiagnosis.

### **Conflict of interest**

There is no conflict of interest.

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