



Research Paper

Pragmatic Leadership in Enhancing Employee Productivity: A Study of Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, 2018-2023

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ABSTRACT:

The study aimed to examine the impact of pragmatic leadership on enhancing employee productivity in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation between 2018 and 2023. The objectives of the study were to examine the leadership practices employed in the Ministry and their influence on employee performance, identify the challenges hindering employee productivity within the Ministry, and propose pragmatic leadership strategies to improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes. The study was guided by 3 research questions. To guide the investigation, the study utilized the Contingency Theory of Leadership, developed by Fred Fiedler. This theory emphasizes that leadership effectiveness depends on the alignment between a leader's style and the situation in which they operate. It challenges the "one-size-fits-all" approach by suggesting that different situations require different leadership strategies to achieve organizational goals. A qualitative methodology, relying on secondary data sources, was used to address the research questions. The study reviewed reports, documents, policies, and organizational records, allowing for an in-depth exploration of leadership practices, employee challenges, and potential leadership strategies in the Ministry. Through this study, key findings highlighted that pragmatic leadership strategies, such as clear communication, adaptability, and employee empowerment, significantly enhance productivity. Furthermore, employee development programs and leadership that fosters collaboration and trust were found to improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes. The study recommended prioritizing clear and transparent communication, ensuring that leaders are responsive and adaptable to employees' needs and external challenges, which will improve employee performance and productivity.

Keywords: Pragmatic Leadership, Employee Productivity, Contingency Theory, Workforce Efficiency, Organizational Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic leadership has emerged as a pivotal framework in organizational management, especially in enhancing employee productivity. Defined by its practical, results-oriented approach, pragmatic leadership emphasizes adaptability, strategic decision-making, and problem-solving to achieve organizational objectives. Unlike traditional leadership models, which may focus heavily on hierarchical structures or rigid policies, pragmatic leadership prioritizes efficiency and innovation, creating a conducive environment for employees to excel. In today's dynamic business landscape, where rapid technological advancements and global competition are reshaping workplace dynamics, organizations must adopt pragmatic leadership to remain competitive. This approach ensures that leaders can navigate complexities, make timely decisions, and foster an environment where employees feel motivated to contribute optimally to organizational goals.

Employee productivity remains a critical determinant of organizational success. Productivity, defined as the efficiency with which resources are transformed into outputs, directly influences profitability, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage (Drucker, 2007). However, achieving high levels of productivity is increasingly challenging in environments characterized by workforce diversity, technological disruptions, and shifting employee expectations. Pragmatic leadership addresses these challenges by integrating flexible strategies, leveraging diverse talent, and aligning organizational goals with employee aspirations. It recognizes the interconnectedness of employee engagement, motivation, and productivity, and employs evidence-based practices to bridge gaps in performance. Pragmatic leaders are characterized by their ability to adapt to unique organizational contexts, integrating theoretical insights with practical applications to drive results. This approach resonates with the contingency theory of leadership, which posits that effective leadership is contingent upon situational factors, including the nature of tasks and the characteristics of the workforce (Fiedler, 1967). Pragmatic leaders employ situational awareness to assess and address specific challenges, fostering a culture of accountability and collaboration. For instance, they prioritize clear communication, delegate responsibilities strategically, and provide continuous feedback to empower employees. Furthermore, pragmatic leadership is inherently participative, involving employees in decision-making processes to enhance their sense of ownership and commitment to organizational goals. This aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivators such as recognition and meaningful work in driving employee satisfaction and performance (Herzberg, 1959). By fostering an inclusive and participative workplace culture, pragmatic leaders not only boost productivity but also promote employee retention and organizational loyalty. The impact of pragmatic leadership on employee productivity is well-documented across various industries. Research by Goleman (2000) highlights the role of emotionally intelligent leadership, a key aspect of pragmatic leadership, in fostering high-performing teams. Similarly, empirical studies suggest that organizations led by pragmatic leaders experience higher employee engagement, reduced turnover, and improved operational efficiency (Yukl, 2013). This underscores the importance of adopting pragmatic leadership practices in addressing contemporary workplace challenges with focus on Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, 2018-2023

II. Statement of the Problem

The Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, tasked with addressing critical social issues and fostering societal well-being, has faced challenges in achieving optimal employee productivity between 2018 and 2023. Despite the Ministry's significant mandate, inefficiencies in leadership practices have hindered its ability to meet organizational goals effectively. Traditional leadership approaches have often resulted in low employee morale, poor engagement, and reduced performance, exacerbated by the evolving demands of the workplace and resource constraints. The absence of a pragmatic leadership framework, characterized by adaptability, strategic decision-making, and participatory management, has further limited the Ministry's ability to leverage its workforce's potential. These challenges underscore the need to explore the role of pragmatic leadership in addressing these productivity gaps and enhancing overall organizational performance.

III. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to examine the impact of pragmatic leadership on enhancing employee productivity in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation from 2018 to 2023. while the objectives are to:

1. Examine the leadership practices employed in the Ministry and their influence on employee performance.
2. Identify the challenges hindering employee productivity within the Ministry.
3. Propose pragmatic leadership strategies to improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes.

IV. Research Questions

1. What leadership practices are employed in the Ministry, and how do they influence employee performance?
2. What challenges hinder employee productivity within the Ministry?
3. What pragmatic leadership strategies can improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes?

V. Theoretical Framework

The Contingency Theory of Leadership

The Contingency Theory of Leadership, developed by Fred Fiedler in the 1960s, provides a foundational framework for understanding the dynamic interplay between leadership styles and situational factors in achieving organizational effectiveness. As one of the earliest theories to challenge the "one-size-fits-all" approach to leadership, Fiedler's contingency model emphasizes that no single leadership style is universally effective. Instead, the effectiveness of a leader is contingent upon the alignment between their natural style and the context in which they operate. This theory has significantly influenced leadership studies by introducing a more nuanced approach to leadership evaluation and application.

At its core, the Contingency Theory identifies two primary leadership styles: task-oriented and relationship-oriented. Task-oriented leaders focus on goal achievement and performance metrics, ensuring tasks are completed efficiently. In contrast, relationship-oriented leaders prioritize interpersonal dynamics, fostering a supportive and cooperative work environment. Fiedler argued that neither style is inherently superior; instead, their effectiveness depends on situational variables such as leader-member relations, task structure, and the leader's positional power. These situational factors form the basis for assessing leadership effectiveness and determining the most suitable leadership approach for a given context. The principles of the Contingency Theory emphasize adaptability, situational analysis, and strategic alignment. Leaders must first understand their inherent style through self-assessment tools like the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale, which measures whether a leader is more task-oriented or relationship-oriented. Following this, leaders evaluate the context of their organization, considering the quality of their relationships with team members, the clarity of the tasks at hand, and their level of authority within the organization. Based on this assessment, leaders can determine the most effective approach to achieve desired outcomes, or, in some cases, adjust the organizational context to better suit their leadership style.

In the context of the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, the Contingency Theory offers valuable insights into addressing leadership challenges that have impacted employee productivity from 2018 to 2023. The Ministry's diverse and dynamic operational environment, characterized by fluctuating resource availability, evolving societal demands, and workforce diversity, necessitates a leadership approach that is both adaptable and context-specific. Applying the Contingency Theory to this study allows for an examination of how existing leadership styles align—or fail to align—with the Ministry's situational factors, such as task complexity and organizational hierarchy. Moreover, the theory underscores the need for pragmatic leadership strategies that adapt to the unique challenges within the Ministry. For instance, task-oriented approaches may be more effective in addressing structured, goal-specific operations, while relationship-oriented strategies might be better suited to enhancing employee morale and engagement. By integrating the Contingency Theory, this study can propose actionable strategies to optimize leadership practices, align them with situational demands, and ultimately enhance employee productivity. The Contingency Theory of Leadership, with its emphasis on situational alignment and leadership adaptability, provides a robust framework for analyzing and improving leadership effectiveness in organizations like the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. Its application to this study highlights the importance of context-specific leadership practices in fostering a motivated and productive workforce.

VI. Empirical Review

Adeyemi (2019). Leadership Styles and Employee Productivity in Public Sector Organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria, aimed to explore the influence of various leadership styles on employee performance. The study focused on identifying which styles—autocratic, democratic, or transformational—were most effective in public organizations. The research questions examined the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation, the impact of leadership on task performance, and the role of communication in fostering productivity. The study adopted the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership, emphasizing how leaders motivate employees to achieve goals by adapting to their needs and work environments. Using a mixed-methods approach, Adeyemi collected data from 150 employees through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that transformational leadership had the most significant positive impact on productivity, followed by democratic leadership, while autocratic leadership was associated with low employee morale. The study concluded that adaptive leadership styles were crucial for improving performance and recommended training programs for leaders to enhance their adaptability. This study contributed to knowledge by highlighting the importance of context-specific leadership strategies in boosting public sector productivity in Nigeria

Okonkwo and Akpan (2020) research, titled *Pragmatic Leadership and Organizational Performance in South-South Nigeria*, aimed to evaluate the role of pragmatic leadership in improving operational efficiency and employee satisfaction. Objectives included examining the characteristics of pragmatic leaders and assessing their impact on productivity metrics. The researchers posed questions on how pragmatic leadership influenced decision-making, team dynamics, and goal achievement. Grounded in Contingency Theory, the study surveyed 200 employees across government ministries in the region using quantitative questionnaires. The findings revealed that pragmatic leaders significantly enhanced performance by aligning leadership approaches with organizational challenges. The study concluded that leadership flexibility was essential for addressing complex workplace dynamics and recommended leadership development initiatives. This study advanced understanding by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of pragmatic leadership in a Nigerian context.

Ibrahim and Yusuf (2021) conducted a study titled *The Impact of Leadership on Employee Morale in Public Institutions in Kano State, Nigeria*. The research aimed to investigate how leadership practices influenced job satisfaction and productivity. The study's objectives included exploring the link between leadership communication and employee morale and evaluating strategies to improve engagement. Research questions centered on the effectiveness of participative leadership styles. The study applied Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and used a qualitative approach involving interviews with 50 employees. Findings highlighted that supportive leadership and recognition significantly boosted morale, while authoritarian practices led to disengagement. The authors concluded that employee-centric leadership was critical and recommended adopting participative models. This study contributed to knowledge by emphasizing the link between leadership and morale in public institutions.

Nwafor (2021), *The Role of Leadership Styles in Enhancing Employee Productivity in Nigerian Civil Service*, aimed to determine the impact of leadership approaches on productivity within Nigeria's civil service. The study's objectives were to analyze the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction, and to identify which leadership approaches were most effective in improving task performance. The research questions explored the effects of authoritarian, transformational, and transactional leadership on employee productivity. The study adopted the Full Range Leadership Model, which includes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. A cross-sectional survey of 300 civil servants in Abuja was conducted using questionnaires. The study found that transformational leadership had the greatest positive impact on productivity, while authoritarian leadership led to lower satisfaction and performance. Nwafor concluded that leadership styles need to be flexible to meet the demands of employees in the civil service. The study recommended training leaders in more transformational practices. This research contributed to the understanding of leadership effectiveness in Nigeria's civil service and the importance of adaptable leadership styles.

Chukwu and Eze (2020), *Leadership and Employee Performance in Public Sector Organizations: A Case Study of Anambra State, Nigeria*, focused on understanding how leadership influences the performance of employees in public sector organizations. The study's objectives included evaluating the impact of leadership decision-making on productivity and determining how different leadership approaches affect employee performance. The research questions examined how leadership styles influenced task completion, employee motivation, and organizational commitment. The study was grounded in the Situational Leadership Theory, which suggests that leadership effectiveness is dependent on the situation and the readiness of followers. Using a mixed-method approach, the researchers conducted surveys with 200 employees and in-depth interviews with 20 managers. The findings indicated that flexible leadership styles, particularly those combining directive and supportive behaviors, were the most effective in boosting employee performance. The study concluded that leaders should adapt their strategies based on employee needs and task requirements and recommended leadership development programs. This research contributed to knowledge by demonstrating the practical application of Situational Leadership Theory in Nigerian public sector organizations.

Akinwale (2020), *Transformational Leadership and Employee Productivity in Nigerian Public Sector Institutions*, aimed to explore the link between transformational leadership and employee productivity within Nigerian public sector institutions. The objectives included examining how transformational leaders inspire employee motivation and assessing the role of vision and communication in improving productivity. The research questions focused on the impact of transformational leadership behaviors such as intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation on job performance. The study was based on the Transformational Leadership Theory, which focuses on leaders who inspire, challenge, and support their followers. A survey of 300 employees across various public institutions in Lagos was conducted using structured questionnaires. Findings revealed that transformational leadership behaviors, particularly intellectual stimulation and individualized attention, significantly enhanced employee productivity. The study concluded

that the adoption of transformational leadership practices was essential for improving public sector performance in Nigeria. It recommended more widespread adoption of transformational leadership and employee-focused strategies. This study added to the knowledge of leadership's role in employee productivity, specifically in the Nigerian public sector context.

Eke and Okafor (2022), *Assessing the Impact of Pragmatic Leadership on Employee Performance in Nigerian Parastatals*, investigated the effect of pragmatic leadership on employee performance in Nigerian parastatals. The study's objectives were to identify leadership practices that enhance productivity and to explore how pragmatic leadership approaches can be implemented in parastatals. The research questions focused on how pragmatic leadership behaviors influence employee task performance and engagement. The study was based on the Contingency Theory of Leadership, which posits that effective leadership depends on the fit between a leader's style and the demands of the situation. Eke and Okafor conducted a quantitative survey of 350 employees working in different Nigerian parastatals. The findings indicated that pragmatic leadership, characterized by flexibility and a focus on employee needs, significantly improved productivity, morale, and job satisfaction. The study concluded that pragmatic leadership was a crucial factor for enhancing employee performance in parastatals and recommended that leaders be trained in adaptable leadership techniques. This research contributed to knowledge by highlighting the role of pragmatic leadership in improving performance in Nigerian parastatals.

Afolabi and Ogunleye (2021), *Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness in Nigerian State-Owned Enterprises*, examined the impact of leadership practices on organizational effectiveness, focusing on Nigerian state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The study's objectives included analyzing the relationship between leadership style and organizational performance and determining the most effective leadership styles in Nigerian SOEs. The research questions asked how leadership styles influenced organizational outcomes such as productivity and employee satisfaction. The study used the Leadership Grid Model, which categorizes leadership behaviors based on concern for people and concern for production. The study adopted a quantitative approach, surveying 200 employees of various state-owned enterprises. The findings revealed that leadership styles that balanced concern for people and concern for production were more effective in improving organizational outcomes. The study concluded that a mix of supportive and task-oriented leadership was essential for enhancing the effectiveness of SOEs in Nigeria. The study recommended that leaders in Nigerian SOEs adopt a balanced leadership approach. This research contributed to understanding leadership's role in improving organizational effectiveness within Nigerian state-owned enterprises.

Oke and Johnson (2022), *The Role of Leadership in Enhancing Employee Efficiency in Nigerian Public Health Institutions*, aimed to investigate the role of leadership in improving employee efficiency in Nigerian public health institutions. The objectives were to evaluate how different leadership styles influenced employee efficiency and to assess the role of pragmatic leadership in overcoming challenges in the health sector. The research questions explored the relationship between leadership and employee performance in the health sector. The study was based on the Leadership-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, which focuses on the relationship between leaders and their followers. Oke and Johnson used a mixed-methods approach, surveying 300 employees in Nigerian public health institutions and conducting interviews with 20 managers. Findings showed that high-quality leader-member relationships were associated with increased efficiency, while poor leadership was linked to inefficiencies. The study concluded that leaders who foster positive relationships with employees could significantly enhance efficiency in public health institutions. It recommended that leadership development programs be implemented to improve leader-member relations. This study contributed to knowledge by focusing on the health sector and the impact of leadership on employee efficiency in Nigeria.

VII. Summary of Literature reviewed and Knowledge Gap

The studies reviewed highlight the crucial role of leadership in enhancing employee productivity, particularly in public sector organizations. The empirical works underline the impact of various leadership styles, including transformational, pragmatic, and situational leadership, on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. Many of these studies, such as those by Olamide (2020) and Akinwale (2020), emphasize the importance of adaptive leadership behaviors that address the specific needs and challenges faced by employees, particularly in Nigerian public sector contexts. Leadership practices like communication, empowerment, recognition, and employee-focused strategies were found to positively influence productivity, engagement, and organizational effectiveness. These studies also demonstrate that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and effective leadership requires flexibility and the ability to respond to the unique needs of employees in varying organizational and cultural settings.

However, despite the robust findings, gaps remain in the literature, especially concerning pragmatic leadership within specific sectors such as social welfare and rehabilitation. Many of the studies reviewed focused on broader public sector organizations or other industries, leaving a gap in knowledge about how pragmatic leadership specifically impacts employee productivity in the context of social welfare agencies, particularly in Rivers State, Nigeria. Additionally, while studies like those by Eke and Okafor (2022) and Nwafor (2021) addressed the general impact of leadership on productivity, there was limited exploration of how pragmatic leadership practices, characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and focus on both task and people, are applied in social welfare ministries. Furthermore, while the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into leadership in Nigerian public sectors, none specifically covered the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, thereby leaving a contextual gap.

The study of pragmatic leadership in enhancing employee productivity within Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, 2018-2023, seeks to fill these gaps. By focusing on a specific ministry, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how leadership styles tailored to the social welfare context can enhance employee productivity. It aims to address the lack of research on the application of pragmatic leadership in this particular sector, providing practical insights and recommendations for improving employee performance in social welfare institutions in Rivers State. The study also contributes by offering an in-depth analysis of how leadership practices can be adapted to meet the specific challenges faced by employees in the ministry, particularly in areas like employee motivation, engagement, and task efficiency.

VIII. Methodology

The methodology used to answer the research questions was qualitative in nature, relying on secondary data sources. The research design was exploratory, aiming to understand leadership practices, productivity challenges, and leadership strategies within the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. Data were collected through a review of existing reports, documents, policies, and organizational records, providing insights into the experiences and perspectives of employees and leadership. This secondary data approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing employee performance and productivity within the Ministry.

IX. Discussion of Findings

1. What leadership practices are employed in the Ministry, and how do they influence employee performance?

The leadership practices employed in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation play a crucial role in influencing employee performance. Leadership, as defined by many scholars, is an essential determinant of organizational success, especially in public sector institutions like ministries. According to Northouse (2018), leadership encompasses the ability to influence others to achieve common goals, a practice that can either enhance or hinder performance depending on the approach taken. In the Ministry, a mix of leadership practices such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and pragmatic leadership are employed, each with distinct impacts on employee performance.

Transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve beyond expectations, is often observed in the Ministry. Leaders who practice transformational leadership focus on personal development, create a shared vision, and foster an environment of trust and respect. Bass and Avolio (1994) suggest that transformational leadership improves employee motivation and performance by aligning the goals of the organization with the personal values and aspirations of the employees. In the case of the Ministry, the leaders' ability to communicate a clear vision of social welfare, combined with a focus on staff development, has contributed to enhanced employee performance. Employees feel more engaged and committed when they believe that their work aligns with both personal and organizational values (Yukl, 2010).

Transactional leadership is also prevalent in the Ministry, focusing on exchanges between leaders and employees, such as offering rewards for good performance or sanctions for poor performance. While transactional leadership has been critiqued for its narrow focus on short-term goals and compliance, studies by Bass (1990) argue that it is effective in environments where clear structures and short-term goals are essential. In the Ministry, transactional leadership has helped to ensure that daily tasks are completed efficiently and that employees adhere to organizational protocols. However, its impact on long-term employee satisfaction and motivation is limited as it fails to inspire deeper commitment or innovation.

In addition to these conventional leadership practices, pragmatic leadership has begun to emerge as a critical leadership practice in the Ministry. Pragmatic leadership, which focuses on practical solutions, flexibility, and adaptability, addresses the real-world challenges employees face. According to Pradhan and Jena (2017), pragmatic leadership is especially effective in complex environments where leadership needs to be dynamic, flexible, and responsive to change. In the Ministry, pragmatic leadership is evident in how leaders adapt their strategies to the evolving needs of employees and the organization. For example, leaders often shift their approach based on the specific challenges employees face, such as changes in policy or resource allocation. This adaptability has a significant impact on employee performance, as it creates an environment where employees feel supported and empowered to overcome obstacles.

Moreover, participative leadership practices, where leaders involve employees in decision-making, have been found to significantly improve employee performance in the Ministry. According to Dierendonck (2012), participative leadership creates a sense of ownership among employees and boosts job satisfaction and performance. In the Ministry, this is seen in the regular meetings and consultations held between employees and leadership, which foster collaboration and ensure that employees' voices are heard in key decisions.

In conclusion, the leadership practices employed in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, including transformational, transactional, and pragmatic leadership, all contribute to influencing employee performance. While transformational leadership boosts long-term motivation and commitment, transactional leadership ensures short-term productivity and adherence to rules. The growing use of pragmatic leadership, with its focus on practical solutions and adaptability, has further enhanced the Ministry's ability to navigate challenges and improve overall employee performance. However, the effectiveness of these leadership practices could be improved through more consistent application and a greater emphasis on participative decision-making.

a) **2. What challenges hinder employee productivity within the Ministry?**

Despite the various leadership practices in place, several challenges hinder employee productivity within the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. These challenges are multifaceted and stem from both internal organizational factors and external contextual issues. Research by Adebayo and Alabi (2018) highlights that employee productivity in public sector organizations is often hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate resources, and a lack of effective communication, all of which are prevalent in the Ministry.

One of the primary challenges affecting employee productivity is the issue of inadequate resources. Public sector ministries, especially those involved in social welfare, often face budget constraints and limited access to essential tools and materials needed to execute tasks efficiently. This challenge is not unique to the Ministry in Rivers State but is common across various public sector institutions in Nigeria. According to Nwachukwu (2019), a lack of sufficient resources—ranging from office supplies to technological infrastructure—limits employees' ability to carry out their duties effectively, resulting in decreased productivity. In the Ministry, employees have expressed frustrations over inadequate office equipment, poor internet access, and delays in the disbursement of funds intended for social programs, all of which slow down their work and reduce their output.

Another major challenge identified is the bureaucratic red tape within the Ministry. Bureaucracy, though essential for maintaining order and structure, often slows down decision-making processes and hampers efficiency. As noted by Akinyele (2019), public sector organizations in Nigeria are often bogged down by layers of paperwork and formal procedures, leading to delays and inefficiencies. Employees in the Ministry have pointed out that lengthy approval processes for even simple tasks hinder their ability to deliver services on time, affecting overall productivity.

In addition, employee morale and motivation are significant challenges that undermine productivity. According to Olanrewaju (2020), lack of proper recognition, inadequate compensation, and limited opportunities for career advancement contribute to low employee morale in Nigerian public sector organizations. In the Ministry, employees have expressed concerns over stagnant salaries, irregular promotions, and the absence of a clear career progression path. These issues lead to decreased motivation, as employees feel that their hard work is not being adequately rewarded. Furthermore, the absence of a formal system for recognizing achievements or rewarding high-performing employees contributes to disengagement, further hindering productivity.

The lack of professional development opportunities is another factor that negatively impacts productivity. Research by Luthans (2011) suggests that continuous professional development is crucial in motivating employees and enhancing their productivity. In the Ministry, there has been limited investment in training programs and capacity-building initiatives for staff. Employees often report feeling underprepared to handle new challenges or adapt to evolving policies due to the lack of professional development programs. As a result, their performance may be compromised, as they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their work practices.

Furthermore, poor communication within the Ministry has been identified as a significant barrier to productivity. According to Allen (2014), communication breakdowns in organizations can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and reduced employee effectiveness. In the Ministry, there are often delays in the dissemination of important information, and communication between leadership and employees can sometimes be unclear or inadequate. This leads to confusion and inefficiencies, as employees may not always be fully aware of the Ministry's goals, priorities, or any changes in procedures that could affect their work.

In conclusion, several factors hinder employee productivity in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, including inadequate resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, low employee morale, lack of professional development opportunities, and poor communication. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms aimed at improving resource allocation, reducing bureaucratic obstacles, enhancing employee engagement and motivation, and investing in staff development. By tackling these challenges, the Ministry can create a more conducive environment for improving employee productivity.

b) ***3. What pragmatic leadership strategies can improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes?***

Pragmatic leadership strategies, which focus on practical solutions, adaptability, and responsiveness to the challenges faced by employees, can significantly improve workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. As discussed earlier, pragmatic leadership is characterized by a leader's ability to adjust their approach to the specific needs of their team and the organization, ensuring that practical and effective solutions are implemented. According to Zaccaro (2012), pragmatic leaders are highly adaptive, and their focus is on achieving organizational goals in the most efficient and practical way possible.

One of the most important pragmatic leadership strategies that can improve workforce efficiency is the adoption of a flexible and adaptive approach to management. Leaders in the Ministry must be responsive to changes in the external environment, such as shifts in government policies, budget constraints, and social issues that affect the Ministry's work. By adopting a flexible management style, leaders can ensure that the Ministry's operations are not hindered by external challenges. According to Kets de Vries (2006), adaptability in leadership is crucial for maintaining efficiency in organizations facing constant change. In the case of the Ministry, leaders who adopt an adaptive approach can better address resource shortages or policy changes, ensuring that the work continues to progress smoothly despite external challenges.

Another pragmatic leadership strategy involves fostering collaboration and teamwork among employees. According to Goleman (2000), leaders who promote teamwork and collaboration create a work environment where employees feel supported and valued, which in turn enhances productivity. In the Ministry, pragmatic leaders can implement strategies that encourage cross-departmental collaboration and the sharing of information and resources. By breaking down silos and promoting teamwork, leaders can ensure that employees work together more effectively to achieve common goals, resulting in higher levels of productivity and better organizational outcomes.

Furthermore, pragmatic leadership strategies should include an emphasis on empowerment and delegation. Leaders who empower their employees by giving them the authority and responsibility to make decisions at lower levels can enhance workforce efficiency and productivity. According to Spreitzer (1995), employee empowerment leads to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and performance. In the Ministry, leaders who delegate decision-making authority to capable employees allow for faster problem-solving and more efficient operations. Empowering employees to take ownership of their tasks and responsibilities also increases their commitment to achieving the Ministry's goals, leading to better organizational outcomes.

A further key strategy is focusing on employee development and continuous learning. Pragmatic leaders should prioritize the professional growth of their employees, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively. As noted by Robbins (2009), providing training and development opportunities is crucial for improving employee performance and ensuring that the organization can adapt to changing demands. In the Ministry, leaders should invest in regular training programs that equip employees with the skills required for their roles and prepare them for future challenges. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, leaders can help employees improve their performance and contribute to the overall success of the Ministry.

In conclusion, pragmatic leadership strategies that focus on adaptability, collaboration, empowerment, and employee development can significantly enhance workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. These strategies not only address the practical challenges faced by employees but also create an environment that promotes high performance and organizational success. By adopting pragmatic leadership practices, leaders in the Ministry can foster a more productive, engaged, and efficient workforce that is better equipped to achieve the Ministry's goals.

X. Key Findings

1. Pragmatic leadership strategies enhance employee performance and productivity through clear communication, adaptability, and empowerment.
2. Employee development programs contribute significantly to workforce efficiency by providing continuous learning and skill-building opportunities.
3. Leadership that fosters collaboration and trust improves organizational outcomes by addressing employee needs and creating a supportive work environment.

XI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on leadership practices and employee productivity in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation highlights the significant role of leadership in shaping employee performance. The Ministry employs a combination of transformational, transactional, and pragmatic leadership practices, each contributing uniquely to employee outcomes. Transformational leadership motivates employees by aligning their personal values with organizational goals, while transactional leadership focuses on maintaining compliance and achieving short-term productivity. The emerging trend of pragmatic leadership, characterized by adaptability, practical solutions, and responsiveness to challenges, has notably enhanced employee performance by fostering a supportive and empowering work environment.

However, despite these leadership efforts, several challenges hinder employee productivity, including inadequate resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, low employee morale, lack of professional development opportunities, and poor communication. These obstacles limit the Ministry's ability to operate effectively, ultimately affecting the overall productivity of the workforce. Addressing these issues is critical to improving the performance of the Ministry's employees and ensuring that they are equipped to meet the demands of their roles.

The adoption of pragmatic leadership strategies, such as flexibility, empowerment, collaboration, and a focus on employee development, has proven effective in improving workforce efficiency and organizational outcomes. By creating an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and equipped with the necessary skills and resources, pragmatic leadership contributes significantly to enhancing productivity and achieving the Ministry's goals. Leaders in the Ministry must continue to refine these strategies and address the challenges that hinder productivity to achieve sustained organizational success. Through these efforts, the Ministry can better fulfill its mission of improving the welfare of the people in Rivers State while simultaneously fostering a productive and engaged workforce.

XII. Recommendations

The study came out with the following recommendations:

1. **Enhance Communication and Adaptability:** The Ministry should prioritize clear and transparent communication, ensuring leaders are responsive and adaptable to employees' needs and external challenges, which will drive improved employee performance and productivity.
2. **Invest in Continuous Employee Development:** Implement comprehensive training programs and skill-building opportunities to enhance workforce efficiency, enabling employees to adapt to evolving roles and contribute more effectively to organizational success.
3. **Promote Collaboration and Trust:** Foster a collaborative and trust-based environment by encouraging teamwork, knowledge-sharing, and mutual support, which will strengthen organizational outcomes and improve employee morale and performance.

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