



THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES IN COMBATING COVID-19 AT WORK RIGHT THROUGH TO COMPANY INFLUENCED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: This study aims fill in the gap on how leadership styles affect the COVID-19 pandemic management among companies whose workers stay at company compound settlements just like mines or farms and to relate the behaviour of the workers to the styles. The study adopted a descriptive case study design using questionnaires to management and subordinates across the departments and all organogram levels of Zimbabwe Platinum Mines' Ngezi Concentrator business unit. In-depth interviews were carried out with leaders and subordinates who are members of some active departments or groups which are the Worker's Committee, Safety Health Environment and Quality (SHEQ), Human Resources and Peer Educators of the same in orders to have in-depth understanding of the leadership styles in use and their effectiveness. The Purposive sampling method was used to identify respondents in the study of which literature indicates that it helps make a sample which is able to give valid information needed in the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0, Descriptive Statistics was used to arrange and display research data in tables, charts and graphs for analysing. The findings established a significant influence of leadership styles in combating COVID-19 for the workplace and company homes. A mixture of styles dominated by the autocratic leadership style are being used by the Zimplats management of which most workers are not satisfied and are willing to pave the road together as a team- Management and subordinates using a transformational leadership style. The study also established that Zimplats was active on work and community disease prevention for malaria, sexual transmitted infections, HIV and Aids always but is now low on COVID-19 in the same community while very active at work. This study recommends transformational leadership as the best leadership style that saves to give the best results both on meeting the needs of the workers and the management hence the organisation as a whole. The study highlights training on leadership skills for different situations and constant engagement with its workers to get the best results in any type or form of disaster management while benchmarking with other successful companies.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Autocratic Leadership; COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, COVID-19 struck China and started spreading like veld fire throughout the world leading to introduction of Lockdowns across continents and countries in order to curb the Disease. Most governments allowed some businesses or companies to operate under the Essential Services grouping while observing strict measures from the mixture and extracts of the WHO, ILO and their Local Governments guidelines. Special permits were given to the persons

working on the Essential Services to move during the lockdowns mostly to provide the services. Some essential service workers do stay in the company settlements in the form of compounds like farms or mines settlements which are controlled by the same companies. It is with this background that this study seeks to find the leadership styles being used both at work and these company influenced communities in order to minimise spread of COVID-19 at work and homes of the workers. The Case Study is the Ngezi

Management and Human Resource Research Journal

Official Publication of Center for International Research Development

Double Blind Peer and Editorial Review International Referred Journal; Globally index

Available www.cirdjournal.com/index.php/mhrrj/; E-mail: journals@cird.online



Concentrator which is one of the several homogeneous business units of Zimbabwe Platinum Mines Limited Company (Zimplats) in Zimbabwe which was granted permission to operate as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leader

A Leader is someone who has followers; Drucker (1999) and Yukl (1989) added that to gain followers, require influence but doesn't exclude the lack of integrity in achieving this. The breaking of the COVID-19 pandemic has put all forms of leadership to test as the journey through can only be achieved by strong engagement between all forms of leadership and followers. With this, the leadership of the essential services providers especially the case Zimplats has to take among the many leadership types and styles.

2.2 Leadership Styles

Autocratic Leadership is characterised by leaders who are classic and bossy in that they retain the decision making rights exclusively to themselves as proclaimed by Obiwuru, et al (2011). Iqbal, et al (2015) goes on to elaborate that the Autocratic leader forces their subordinates to render their duties according to the leader's ways which are less creative and promote one sided communication and may be effective for achieving goals in a short time as portrayed by Bahrgavi and Yaseen (2016). Zimplats followers would have to embrace the procedures whether they like it or not.

Moss & Ritossa (2007) defined **Laissez -Faire** as a type of leadership where the behaviour of the leader is passive and indifferent to their followers. Uchenwamgbe (2013) labels a leader as **Transactional** if they are willing to exchange something like pay rise, promotion or new responsibilities for their performance. In other words, it's a reward-based kind of relationship between the Leader and the worker. Ojokuku, et al., (2012) as a result defines it as the exchange of targets and rewards between management and the workers.

Bass and Avolio (1994) asserted that **Transformational Leadership** occurs when Leaders broaden or elevates the interest of the followers and encourage them to look beyond their self-interests. Scholars identified four components of Transformational leadership- **Idealized Influence** (charisma), **Inspirational Motivation**, **Intellectual Stimulation** and **Individualized Consideration**.

Idealised Influence is defined by Moss and Ritossa (2007) as the degree in which leaders are perceived as Role Models mostly when they go out of their way to improve their workgroups. **Inspirational motivation** was described by Judge & Piccolo (2004) as the degree in which the leader announces a vision that is attractive and encouraging to followers. **Intellectual stimulation** explains the degree in which the leaders stimulate, excite or encourage their followers to be innovative and creative (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). **Individualized consideration** as described by Yukl (2006) refers to the degree in which leaders provide support, encouragement, and coaching to followers. Zimplats leaders have to provide support to their workers in terms of their needs while at the same time agreeing with them on ways to bring the COVID-19 way of life under control both at work and homes

The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid was developed by scientifically reviewing the behaviour of Leaders and their effects on personnel and environment. According to Northouse (2013) the grid was designed to explain how Organisations can achieve their goals with two factors- '**Concern for People**' and '**Concern for Results**' using different Styles of leadership. **Impoverished leadership** has been likened to the Laissez -Faire leadership style, **Authority-compliance/ Task leadership** to the Autocratic Style and **Team leadership** to Transformational Leadership in the eyes of the researcher. **Country Club style** of leadership has low concern on Task accomplishment but high concern for interpersonal relationships hence leadership make sure the personal and social needs of subordinates (followers) are met by creating a positive climate , being agreeable, eager to help as well as comforting



(Northouse, 2013). **Middle-of-the-Road** leadership compromises and has intermediate concern for the Task and intermediate concern for the subordinates who do the task thereby giving up some of the push for production at the same time giving up some of the attention to subordinates needs in order to strike a balance (Northouse, 2013).

2.3 Leadership and Followership

It is incomplete to talk of Leadership without Followers and the dynamics involved. The reality remains that Leadership and Followers complement each other. A big point worth noting is that the Leadership Style in use at a Workplace can create a type of Followers and the reverse is true- the type of Followers at a workplace can influence a Leadership Style to use.

Kellerman (2008) defined followers as subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors and who therefore usually, but not consistently, fall into line. Leadership has to groom a followership from the following types; **The Alienated** (critical and independent in thinking followers who fulfil their roles without enthusiasm, often cynical and disgruntled), **Passive** (do not exhibit independent thinking or active participation but limit their activity to what they are told to do, and this is often the resultant of leaders who are over-controlling or who punish

mistakes.), **Pragmatic** (who do have qualities of all follower styles and shift to any different style depending on what fits with the situation at hand for best benefits of own position and minimizing own risks. They do not state their opinion on issues and will not take a stand, hence they are difficult to trust) and the **Effective Followers** (who work towards competency, solutions, and a positive impact. They contribute with enthusiasm and support leaders. **2.4 The Conceptual Framework**

Figure 2.2 below shows the pictorial of the conceptual framework highlighting the Leadership styles as the **independent variable** and the Organisational performance being the **dependent variable**. Followership is indicated as a **Mediator Variable**- a mediator variable links the Independent and Dependent variables representing the generative mechanism through which the Dependent Variable is influenced by the Independent variable, (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The Zimplats Performance in a risky environment of the COVID-19 pandemic is dependent on the Leadership Styles applied to the followers- the subordinates. The Zimplats leadership (Independent variable) style used can create a type of followers (moderator variable) that can effectively work for a less risky productivity (dependent variable).

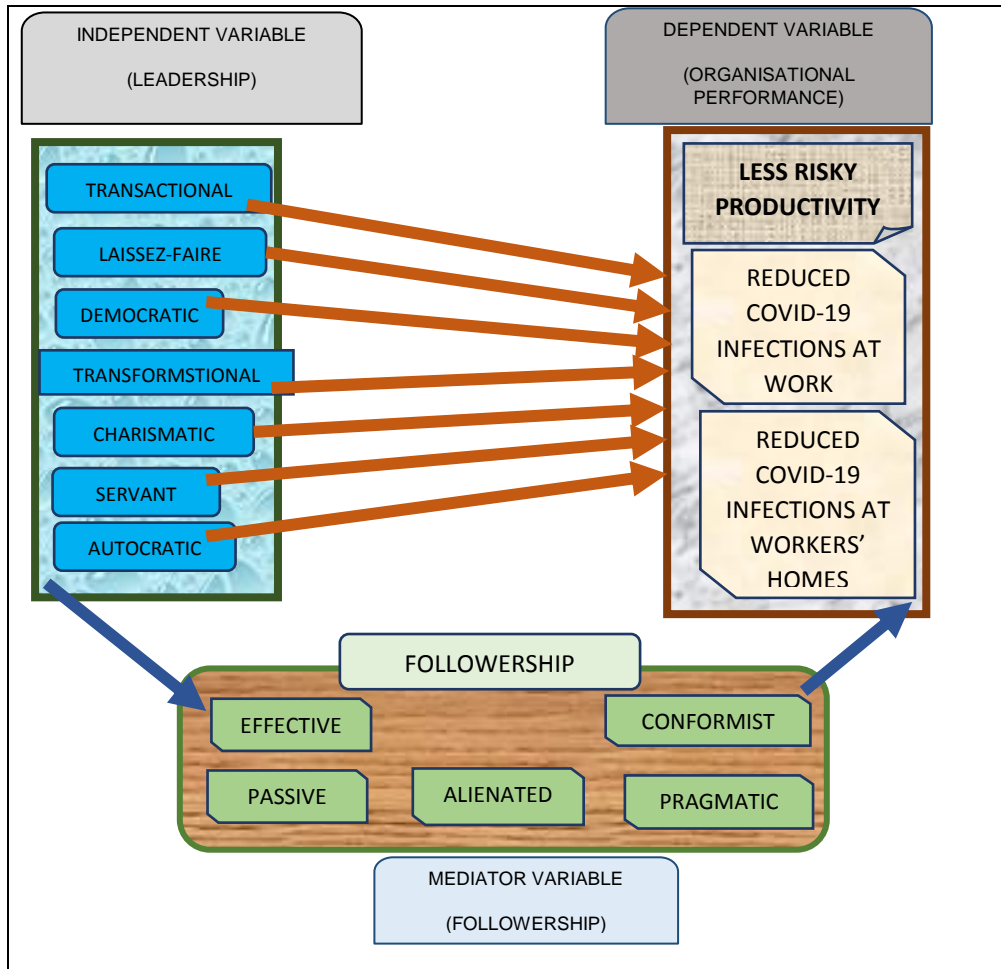


Figure2. 1 The Conceptual Framework. (Source: By the Author, 06 December 2020)

2.5 Main Research objective

- ❖ To find the impact of Leadership styles in combating COVID-19 and management of the paradigm shift of workers' life both at work and home for Zimplats Ngezi Mines.

2.6 Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Leadership Styles and combating COVID-19 effectively at work and home.

H₁: There is significant relationship between Leadership Styles and combating COVID-19 effectively at work and home.

3. METHODOLOGY

Accordingly, the researcher adopted the Pragmatism Philosophy which is characterised by Saunders et al. (2016) to include the **Ontology** (the flux of processes, experiences and practices) in this case, is the change in the working and living conditions of the Zimplats workforce due to the COVID-19 pandemic while the **Epistemology** (focus on problems, practices and relevance for problem solving as well as informed future practice contribution.) in this case is coming up with the best leadership style that will evoke excellent followership that translates to the worker homes for



total living and working with COVID-19. Lastly, the **Axiology** (value driven) is to create the best leadership styles for disaster management at work while caring for the worker's total wellbeing. The philosophy accommodates Qualitative and Quantitative Data as well as a combination of Approaches to research. The Descriptive Case Study is the design that has been adopted by the researcher focusing on the Zimbabwe Platinum Mines (Zimplats)- Ngezi Mining. According to Yin (2014), this design allows an in-depth study of the leadership styles being used by Zimplats to combat COVID-19 and reveals fully the essence and meanings of leaders and workers behaviour during this pandemic. Also, this descriptive research's purpose is to gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations (Zikmund et al., 2009) in the Zimplats case.

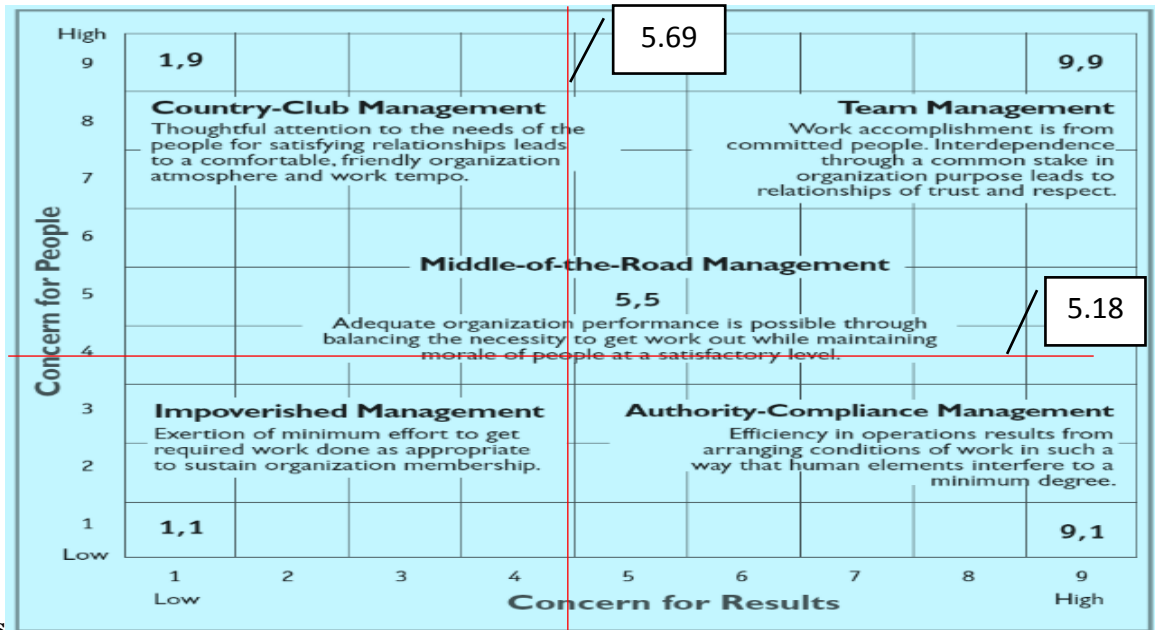
This study stands to benefit the use of the Abductive Approach in the interrogation of the research problem through quantitative Data, the Ngezi mines Workers and Management through Questionnaires while the Qualitative Data is collected from probing questions in interviews and Open-Ended questions in Questionnaires.

It is with this background that the researcher selected the sample from the Ngezi Concentrator management and Subordinates for this study. The total population of this study is taken from Ngezi Concentrator which (as of December 01, 2020) is made up of 2 Senior Managers; 5 Junior Managers; 12 Supervisors and 173 Subordinates making up a total of 192 workers. Supervisors and managers were grouped as management. A sample size of 66 out of 192 Ngezi Concentrator Business Unit was used in the research of

which the interviews were planned for 7 respondents (4 Management and 3 Subordinates) with the remaining 59 given questionnaires (11 Management and 48 subordinates). This sample size was determined as a compromise of costs, time of follow ups on the dispatched research tools and the effort to reduce the number of interactions between persons during this COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the researcher used data collection techniques that involve both qualitative data through in-depth **interviews** and **questionnaires** while the quantitative numeric data was obtained from the questionnaires too.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Cooper and Schindler (2014, p376) outlined that after Data Collection comes Data Preparation which includes Editing, Coding and Data Entry for conversion from raw to classified forms that are appropriate for analysis. This study's collected Data underwent the same process with the use of the computer software **Statistic Package of Social Scientists (SPSS) V16.0**-Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics. The SPSS Frequency, Scores, Sums and Mean data from the questionnaires' Likert scales were used to plot the Blake and Mouton Grid in order to find the current Zimplats leadership styles as well as the sums of respondents' choices. At the same note, Frequencies and Percentiles from SPSS were used to display charts and graphs for data analysing like the demographics of respondents. The Theoretical Framework was used as a basis and logical measure of the interpretation of Data and Analysis as highlighted by Saunders et al. (2016). This assisted to ensure Data addressed the research objectives.



Results

Figure 1.1 Plotted questionnaires response on leadership styles currently in use. (Source: Primary data plotted on The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid: Northouse, P.G. (2013). Leadership: Theory and Practice (6th Ed.))

SPSS Analysis					
Current Leadership Style					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Transformational	25	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Laissez Faire	2	3.3	3.3	45.0
	Transactional	3	5.0	5.0	50.0
	Autocratic	30	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.1 Table of analysis on the response to direct question on the current Zimplats leadership style. (Source: Primary data)



		Preferred Leadership Style			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Transformational	42	70.0	70.0	70.0
	Transactional	8	13.3	13.3	83.3
	Autocratic	9	15.0	15.0	98.3
	Laissez Faire	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.2 Table on results of the response to direct question on the preferred Zimplats leadership style. (Source: Primary data)

Table 1.1 shows the current leadership style identified by the responses to be in practice to combat COVID-19 for Zimplats employees at work and home dominated by Autocratic leadership style. Table 1.2 shows results of the response to the direct question on the preferred Zimplats leadership style preferred by most to be Transformational leadership style.

The two methods used- the **Blake and Morton grid** and the **Direct Questioning**, the results from the **Blake and Morton grid** indicated that the Middle of the Road Leadership style is being used at Zimplats. The direct questioning revealed a mixed feeling between Autocratic and Transformational leadership style (though much indication is autocratic leadership) is being used at Zimplats to combat COVID-19 for workers both at home or work. All its workers wished Zimplats change its style of leadership in dealing with COVID-19 to transformational leadership.

The in-depth interviews- by comparison, revealed that Zimplats used to (this stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic) control the spread of Malaria at workers' homes by periodic preventative spraying of every company house in Ngezi but nothing is being done for COVID-19 though there are scheduled deep cleaning or disinfecting of every company building and this time not workers' homes. At the same note, campaigns about HIV and Aids were being religiously done by the Zimplats Medical Team in Ngezi to create a healthy workforce and families. Also, Zimplats used to influence good housekeeping at workers' homes by introducing competitions and prizes for the best households. With this, Zimplats was advocating for the

workers good beings both at work and home before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results on the Hypothesis

The behaviour of the workers both at home and work and the Tables 1.1; Table 1.2 and the figure 1.1 combined are used to determine the effects of the current leadership styles to workers and provide significant evidence to suggest H_1 : that 'there is significant relationship between Leadership style and combating COVID-19 effectively at work or workers home'. Also, the Blake and Mouton grid whose results of the middle-of-the-road leadership style which is a compromise of both the results and the people's needs strengthen the fact that there is a significant relationship between the leadership styles in combating COVID-19 effectively at home and work. With this, the Null Hypothesis (H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Leadership Styles and combating COVID-19 effectively at work and home.) was rejected.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The use of the Blake and Morton grid revealed that Zimplats leadership uses the Middle-of-the-Road Management while the direct questioning revealed some elements of mixed feelings on transformational, autocratic and transactional though autocratic



leadership was more pronounced. Accordingly, the study concludes that Zimplats uses mixed leadership styles- Middle-of the-Road management style of leadership in order to manage its operation in the COVID-19 pandemic atmosphere. The mixed leadership styles used by Zimplats include autocratic, transformational and transactional while the Laissez-Faire was not dominant.

5.1 The impact of leadership in use to combat covid-19 at work and home for the Zimplats Ngezi workers.

The old axiom goes ‘one word is enough for a wise man’, and it is very true that on any group of man, not many are wise enough to take the heed. This means all the warnings and utterings about COVID-19 are not taken at the same go and the same understanding due differences in people and the style of leadership at the Zimplats workforce hence the existence of laggards. The effect of the leadership styles is seen with the change of behaviour of the workforce at work and home as well as their dependents in the company influenced community. The study results revealed that not all the workers accept that their behaviour alongside their dependents is due to the Zimplats leadership efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. This then shows no adequate teamwork is being experienced by the workers (though management are putting effort to it) hence the wishing of followers to a change in current leadership styles. Transformational leadership is the preferred style and could make Zimplats employees behave as the management wishes in the COVID-19 era and any other pandemic of a similar nature as indicated by respondents who wish for a change in the reigning management style. As a conclusion, the impact of the Zimplats leadership styles is strong at work and weak at the company houses hence moderate in total. This totally agrees with the gap identified in the research problem that the well-informed workers only follow the COVID-19 guidelines at work and do completely the opposite at home creating a situation where COVID-19 is spread from homes to work. This can jeopardise the operations of Zimplats as a whole.

5.2 The effective leadership style that can be used to combat covid-19 at work and home for the Zimplats Ngezi workers.

An effective leadership style is one that both the leader and the followers have a rapport both in decision making and actions which are free from dictatorial or domineering actions from either side. Both the Zimplats leaders and followers’ majority wished for and identified transformational leadership as a style that allows free and fair engagement of both parties to fight the pandemic as a complete team. With the data that was analysed in this study, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership style is the one that can be used by Zimplats to enhance the combating of COVID-19 both at work and homes of the Zimplats workforce for a continued safe operation of the enterprise amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Middle-of-the-Road Management (5,5) tries to keep a balance between the Zimplats goals combating of COVID-19 both at work and homes of the Zimplats workforce and the personal needs of its workers. Here, the leadership focuses on an adequate performance through a balance between the work requirements and satisfactory morale. Both the people and organisational needs are not completely met, and thus Zimplats would land up with average results both ways. This also echoes that the transformational leadership style is the one that can be used by Zimplats to enhance the combating of COVID-19 both at work and homes of the Zimplats workforce.

6. AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

This research has unearthed some areas that need research in the future like how organisation can come up with some training on leadership skills upgrade and disaster management especially on the social side while taking this COVID-19 pandemic as a benchmark for future Disaster Management Plans. At the same note further study is needed on how leadership can influence or convert any type of followers to good followers (Effective followers) in the organisations. Research is also needed to find how the organisation boards (or



Boards of directors) can influence leadership styles on different situations on their organisations.

7. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been fast, emergency researches and responses on how to manage COVID-19 at work and homes of which central governments were left to deal with all homes or communities. However, not much research was done on how to manage COVID-19 at the homes of the workers who reside on company influenced communities like farms and mine settlements. This research is distinctive as it attempts to bring business leadership in addressing the management of covid-19 issues not only at work but at the company influenced homes of workers hence extend attention to those at home were the essential workers live and possibly share the dangers indirectly. The study will be of great benefit for the efforts companies are putting to save their business, workers as well as other stakeholders.

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