

An Analysis of the Relationship between Socioeconomic Factors and Leadership Styles in Selected Counties of the Alabama Black Belt

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Abstract

Socioeconomic factors are important to leadership styles and may have an influence on leadership styles. The study assessed the relationship between socioeconomic factors and leadership styles in selected counties of the Alabama Black Belt. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 38 locally elected officials, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that there were more male, Black, "older", educated, moderate- to moderately high-income household, and low- to medium-tenured elected officials than otherwise. The most dominant leadership style was participating; followed by telling and selling. Gender and age had enhancing effects (i.e., positive relative impacts) on the participating leadership style; race had enhancing effects on the selling, delegating, and democratic leadership styles; education had enhancing effects on the selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles; household income had enhancing effects on all the leadership styles, and tenure had an enhancing effect on the autocratic leadership style. This suggests that the officials are more prone to use the said leadership styles vis-à-vis the particular socioeconomic factors.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Leadership, Socioeconomic factors, Black Belt

1. Introduction

Leadership may mean different things to different people. For instance, Akhtar (2012) explained that leadership is a product of one's position, personality traits, and observable behaviors, depending on the situation in which it is employed and conditional to how the leader and his followers react and interact with each other. He further explained that, in organizations, leadership refers to the influence of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives. It involves directing, controlling, motivating, and inspiring staff towards the achievement of organizational goals. According to Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider (2015), leadership is a process by which a manager can direct, guide, and influence the behavior and work of others toward the achievement of specific goals in a given situation. Furthermore, the authors stressed that leadership entails the ability of a manager to inspire the subordinates to work with confidence and zeal; it involves persuasion and explanation as well as ability to identify, affirm, and renew the values of the group the leader represents. They also argued that managerial expertise, technical skills, cultural literacy and other relevant knowledge and skills needed to be an effective leader. Associated with the preceding, is the responsibility of providing guidance and sharing the knowledge and skills with employees to lead them to attain better performance and quality. Robbins & Judge (2007, p.356) also described leadership as "the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of a vision or a set of goals."

Ricketts (2005) emphasized the role that leadership plays at the community level. The author intimated that leadership is an interactive process between individuals within a common locality; it is the accomplishment of the group's purpose. Additionally, the author indicated that effective community leaders are the most influential members of the community; they develop important relationships, establish communication, and provide the community with "directions." Specifically, they are dedicated to serving their community within specific social groups, showing a very strong sense of service, most often with no reward desired. Also, [Davies](#) (2007) stressed that leadership is associated with the ability to mobilize individuals to change the conditions of their community. In Davies' view, it engages the creative energies of diverse actors bound together to share responsibilities and handle problems.

Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider (2015) contended that in the recent years, leadership has emerged as a new efficient approach for managing organizations and employees. The traditional concept of personnel administration has been gradually replaced with the concept of human resource management. This gives importance to the strategic integration of new leadership styles into effective management of employees and to improve the employee's performance. The authors explained that a "leadership style" refers to a leader's behavior and attitude of governance and supervision; it is the result of personality traits, experience, attitude, and philosophy of the leaders. According to them different leadership styles are used based on empowerment and decision-making authority. These leadership styles are participative, autocratic, and democratic. Daniel (2002) also categorized

different leadership styles and suggested that they could be explained from autocratic through democratic to participative to show the degree of authority and decision-making power of leaders and employees. Akhtar (2012) identified three different leadership styles, namely, transactional, transformational, and charismatic.

Moreover, it is believed that socioeconomic factors affect leadership styles, and socioeconomic factors relative to leadership styles of elected leaders is a pertinent issue in the Black Belt Counties of Alabama. The Black Belt is a place where effective leadership has been tied to community progress, and community progress is reflected by social indicators. For example, Winemiller (2009) reported on specific social indicators of the Alabama Black Belt as high rates of poverty, low taxes on property, high rates of unemployment, low achieving schools, high rates of out-migration, high levels of single parent homes, high levels of teen pregnancies, limited access to health-care services, and has a large population of African Americans. This study deals with the Alabama Black Belt because generally development in this region has not been that great. In addition, socioeconomic factors may affect the leadership styles of elected leaders, and thus, impinge on development.

As a result of the preceding, there is a need to closely examine issues of leadership styles and their relationship to socioeconomic factors in the Alabama Black Belt Counties. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to analyze the relationship between socioeconomic factors and leadership styles in selected counties of the Alabama Black Belt. Specific objectives were to (1) identify and describe socioeconomic factors, (2) identify, describe and assess leadership styles, and (3) examine the relative impact or importance of socioeconomic factors on leadership styles.

2. Literature Review

Leadership styles describe the way leaders behave. Socioeconomic factors could affect leadership styles, and this affects progress in the community. This section discusses leadership styles as well as the relationship between leadership styles and socioeconomic factors from selected previous studies.

2.1 Leadership Styles

Lester (1975) in assessing leadership styles, a key to effectiveness, described three main leadership styles, including, autocratic, democratic, and free-rein. He stressed that in autocratic leadership, the leader “determines all policies, activities, and goals of the organization.” However, in democratic leadership, the leader provides a “shared leadership that promotes a feeling of satisfaction and achievement as the group makes progress on tasks.” Further, in free-rein leadership, the leader gives “minimum guidance” to followers. Lester posited that democratic leadership style has the potential to realize maximum outcomes.

Hersey & Blanchard (1993) described the situational leadership model. The authors identified four leadership styles, namely, telling, selling, participating, and delegating. They emphasized that telling leadership style involves high task and low relationship; selling leadership style involves high task and high relationship; participating leadership style involves high relationship and low task, and delegating leadership style involves low relationship and low task. They stressed that the particular style that a leader uses varies and depends on a particular situation.

Ricketts (2005) assessed the importance of community leadership to successful rural communities. The researcher identified two types of leadership styles, particularly, task-oriented leadership style and structure-oriented leadership style. Ricketts argued that task-oriented leaders provide very specialized leadership roles in only a single phase of activities. On the contrary, structure-oriented leaders provide coordination and continuity to the entire organization through extensive involvement in many phases of activities. The author also indicated that both specialized and generalized leaders are necessary to maintain “community structure” and performance of collective action.

Davies (2007) evaluated the nature of leadership in rural communities. The author mentioned two types of leadership styles, transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership style involves an interaction between two or more persons. The transactional leader rewards the subordinates who perform well and does not reward or punishes those who do not perform well. In contrast, transformational leadership involves leaders and followers working together to develop mutual goals and meet their needs. The transformational leader brings followers up to a level where they are successful in accomplishing tasks without the leader’s intervention.

Akhbar (2012) analyzed the relationship of managers’ leadership styles with gender, experience and socioeconomic status. He identified three different types of leadership styles, namely, transformational, transactional, and charismatic. The main behaviors of a transformational leader include establishing goals, building a good image, demonstrating confidence, and creating motivation. Transformational leaders motivate their followers by being optimistic, establishing ambitious goals, and projecting an idealized vision. The transactional leader focuses on clarifying roles and tasks, and providing followers with material or psychological rewards on the achievement of contractual obligations. The charismatic leadership has a well-defined vision and mission, and is trustworthy and loyal. A charismatic leader also has extraordinary talent, high self-esteem, persuasive skills, care, devotion, and extreme influence on followers.

Juarez & Contreras (2012) examined the influence of optimism and socioeconomic characteristics on leadership practices. They also mentioned three types of leadership styles, including transformational, charismatic, and transactional. According to them, transformational leaders are not afraid to face challenges; they promote adaptation; encourage participatory decision-making, and are open to change. They are innovative; possess negotiation skills; persistent; supportive; and thus, enhancing performance. A charismatic leader creates a positive vision of the future and has an impact on the emotional temperament of the team, because of his or her openness, positive information processing, and transmission of expectations. A transactional leader rewards or punishes according to performance of the followers. He or she closely monitors the activities of subordinates, pays attention to mistakes and deviations, and takes actions to correct them.

Othman, Lawrence, & Mohammed (2012) performed a review of factors that influence leadership styles among top management in small and medium enterprises. They, yet again, identified three types of leadership styles, transformational, charismatic, and transactional. They argued that transformational leaders inspire their subordinates to achieve organizational objectives. Transformational leadership is based on idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Charismatic leadership is also characterized by idealized influence; people generally follow who they like, especially in terms of achieving goals. A charismatic leader is sensitive to his or her members' needs; he or she articulates the vision and is a risk-taker. Transactional leadership is based on a series of exchanges or agreements between leaders and followers. The main focus in this style is setting goals, clarifying the link between performance and rewards, and providing constructive feedback to keep followers on task.

Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider (2015) evaluated the effect of leadership style on employee performance. They found three main leadership styles; these were autocratic, democratic, and participative. They stressed that autocratic leadership style is characterized by an "I tell" philosophy. Autocratic leaders tell their subordinates what to do; they control all decision making power; they are unrealistic in demands; they use excessive discipline and punishment, and do not allow others to question decisions or authority. In opposition, they argued that the democratic leadership style is considered as the best style of leadership. It is characterized by an "I share" philosophy; decisions are made within teams, with each member having equal input. The democratic leader makes no suggestions but asks for the group members' opinions; the group is left to make its own decisions democratically. The participative leadership style is one that involves all members of the team in identifying essential goals and developing procedures or strategies for reaching those goals. It can be seen as a leadership style that relies heavily on the leader functioning as a facilitator rather than simply issuing orders or making assignments.

Loiseau (2015) discussed the types of leadership styles. The author identified eleven types of leadership styles, specifically, autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, democratic, servant, laissez-faire, people-oriented, task-oriented, transactional, transformational, and environmental. The autocratic leader makes the decision alone, has total authority, and imposes his or her will. The bureaucratic leader believes in the structure of procedures and focuses on the pre-established measures whether he or she is successful or not. The charismatic leader leads by injecting energy and eagerness into the team members. The democratic leader listens to the team's ideas and analyzes them, but has the responsibility to make the final decision. The servant leader facilitates goal achievement by giving his or her team members what they need in order to be productive. The laissez-faire leader is a leader that does not lead at all; he or she fails in supervising team members, resulting in the lack of control and bad service. The people-oriented leader is the one that promotes effectiveness and efficiency, by supporting, training and developing the personnel; thus, increasing job satisfaction and interest in doing the job well. The task-oriented leader focuses on the job, and concentrates on the specific tasks assigned to each team member to fulfill a goal. The transactional leader assigns tasks, and rewards or punishes subordinates for the team's performance. The transformational leader motivates the team to be effective and efficient. The environmental leader encourages team members to affect their emotional and psychological temperament to feel they are part of the team.

2.2 Leadership Styles and Socioeconomic Factors

Wall, Pettibone, & Kelsey (2005) analyzed the impact of socioeconomic status on leadership potential in an agricultural leadership program. They found that income, education, and gender had statistically significant effects on an individual's level of community involvement. Respondents with higher incomes tended to participate more in community leadership activities than those with lower incomes. Respondents with higher educational levels tended to participate more in community leadership activities than those with lower educational levels. Female respondents were more involved in community leadership activities than male respondents.

Akhtar (2012) examined the relationship of managers' leadership styles with gender, experience and income. The author found that male managers adopted transactional leadership style more often than female managers (24 vs. 12%); male and female managers tended to be equally transformational leaders (66 vs. 65%), and female managers adopted charismatic leadership style more than male managers (67 vs. 22%). According to the author, respondents with higher incomes adopted charismatic leadership style more than those with medium and lower incomes (75 vs. 62 vs. 22%). Respondents who had experiences 0-5 years preferred charismatic

leadership style more than those who had experiences 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years, and 26 years or more. Those with experiences 11-15 years preferred transactional leadership style more than those who had experiences 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years, and 26 years or more. Those with experiences 16-20 years preferred transformational leadership style more than those who had experiences 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 21-25 years, and 26 years or more. In other words, those with shorter tenures opted more for charismatic; those with medium tenures opted more for transactional, and those with longer tenures opted more for transformational.

Mohammed, Othman, & D'Silva (2012) analyzed the sociodemographic factors that influence transformational leadership style among top management in selected organizations. The sociodemographic factors were gender, race, marital status, and educational level. The results revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between any of the sociodemographic factors and transformational leadership style.

Othman, Lawrence, & Mohammed (2012) performed a review of factors that influence leadership styles among top management in small and medium enterprises. They found that socioeconomic factors, such as gender, age, and race, had statistically significant effects on leadership styles. There was a significant difference between male and female leaders in task accomplishment and interpersonal styles. Men were found to be more task-oriented in leadership style, whereas women were more relationship-oriented in leadership style. Women were more democratic, whereas males were more autocratic. Also, older managers were found to be more consultative in decision-making than younger managers. Younger managers were more risk-takers and new approach-oriented in decision-making than older managers. In addition, leaders preferred working with employees that were more cooperative, while the employees preferred working with leaders from the same race.

Theorell et al. (2012) evaluated socioeconomic stratification of perceived leadership. They examined the influence of age, income, and education on non-listening and self-centered leadership styles. Education had a statistically significant effect on both non-listening and self-centered leadership styles; whereas age had a statistically significant effect on only non-listening leadership style. Income did not have a statistically significant effect on both leadership styles.

Sirinivasan, Janakiram, & Todalbagi (2013) assessed impact of technology on leadership style based on "least preferred coworker." They reported that female respondents adopted relationship-motivation leadership style more than male respondents. Younger respondents adopted relationship-motivation leadership style than older respondents. Those with higher educational levels adopted task-motivation leadership style more than those with lower educational levels. Respondents with experiences 1-5 years adopted relationship-motivation leadership style more than those with experiences 6-10 and 11-15 years. Those with experiences 6-10 years adopted task-motivation leadership style more than those with experiences 1-5 and 11-15 years.

Chaluvadi (2015) investigated differences in leadership styles between genders. The found that female leaders adopted democratic and participative leadership styles more than male leaders. Correspondingly, male leaders adopted the command and the control leadership styles more than female leaders. In addition, male leaders were generally more interpersonally or communally-oriented than female leaders. Female leaders were more participative than male leaders. The results also revealed that female leaders employed transformational and transactional leadership styles more than the male leaders. Female leaders tended to motivate their members with positive, reward-based incentives compared to male leaders who chose to employ stricter and less effective threatening styles of leadership.

2.3 Summation

The above literature review has examined leadership styles, and how socioeconomic factors affect leadership styles. A common thread throughout the literature is that certain socioeconomic factors do impinge on particular leadership styles. Hence, the need to examine the relative importance of socioeconomic factors to leadership styles in the Alabama Black Belt.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed to collect the data for the study. It consisted of five sections: situational attributes, economic scenario, educational scenario, social scenario, and demographic attributes. The Institutional Review Board of the Institution reviewed and approved the questionnaire, before it was administered using purposive sampling. The subjects were elected city and county officials from selected Black Belt Counties of Alabama; specifically, city councillors, mayors, and county commissioners. The Black Belt was chosen because of its characteristics and challenges (referred to previously in the Introduction).

Four Black Belt Counties were selected and labeled as counties A, B, C, and D for confidentiality reasons. Counties A and D are situated in the east of the Black Belt; county B is located in the west of the Black Belt, and county C is located in the central part of the Black Belt. The data were collected through self-administration by subjects in the spring, summer, and fall of 2015 as well as spring of 2016. County Extension agents helped in

facilitating the process. In all, the sample size was 38, and this was considered adequate for analysis.

3.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS 12.0 (Mapinfo Corporation, Troy, NY). The descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages. The general model for the multiple regression analysis was stated as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + X_1\beta_1 + X_2\beta_2 + \dots + X_n\beta_n + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

- Y = dependent variable
- X_i = independent variables
- β_i = coefficients
- ε = error term

Seven models were developed based on specific leadership styles; particularly, telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic as well as the composite or combined leadership style.

The empirical model for model 1 was stated as:

$$TEL = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (2)$$

Where:

TEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3

if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

GEN = 1 if respondent indicated male; 0 if respondent indicated female

RAC = 1 if respondent indicated Black; 2 if respondent indicated White

AGE = 1 if respondent indicated 25-34 years; 2 if respondent indicated 35-44 years; 3

if respondent indicated 45-54 years; 4 if respondent indicated 55-64 years; 5 if respondent indicated 65 years or older

EDU = 1 if respondent indicated two-year/technical education; 2 if respondent indicated some college; 3 if respondent indicated college degree; 4 if respondent indicated post-graduate/professional degree

HHI = 1 if respondent indicated \$19,999 or less; 2 if respondent indicated \$20,000-29,999; 3 if respondent indicated \$30,000-39,999; 4 if respondent indicated \$40,000-49,999; 5 if respondent indicated \$50,000-59,999; 6 if respondent indicated \$60,000-69,999; 7 if respondent indicated \$70,000-79,999; 8 if respondent indicated \$80,000 or higher

TEN = number of years served

β_i = coefficients

Identical models were set up for models 2 to 6, as follows:

Model 2

$$SEL = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (3)$$

Where:

SEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3

if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 3

$$PAR = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (4)$$

Where:

PAR = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3

if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 4

$$DEL = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (5)$$

Where:

DEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3

if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 5

$$AUT = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (6)$$

Where:

AUT = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3

if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 6

$$DEM = \beta_0 + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2RAC + \beta_3AGE + \beta_4EDU + \beta_5HHI + \beta_6TEN \quad (7)$$

Where:

DEM = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 7

$$CLS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GEN + \beta_2 RAC + \beta_3 AGE + \beta_4 EDU + \beta_5 HHI + \beta_6 TEN \quad (8)$$

Where:

CLS = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

Independent variables = as previously described

Specifically then, the empirical models hypothesize that the telling leadership style (TEL), selling leadership style (SEL), participating leadership style (PAR), delegating leadership style (DEL), autocratic leadership style (AUT), democratic leadership style (DEM), and composite or combined leadership style (CLS) are influenced by gender (GEN), race (RAC), age (AGE), education (EDU), household income (HHI), and tenure (TEN). These leadership styles were selected based on the review of the literature and authors' experiences. The composite or combined leadership style is included in the analysis, because it is possible that a confluence of leadership styles may be at play at any one time. It was assumed that the directions of the influences or expected signs of the independent variables were not known a priori. The criterion that was used to assess the model was the beta coefficient or the standardized beta. The beta coefficient measures the relative impact of the independent variable on, or the importance of the independent variable to, the dependent variable. This means that the larger the beta coefficient, the stronger the independent variable's influence on the dependent variable (O'Sullivan & Russell, 1995).

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the results of the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents. It depicts more male than female elected officials (74 vs. 26%), and more Black than White elected officials (76 vs. 21%). In addition, the proportion of older (over 44 years) elected officials was higher than the proportion of younger elected officials (87 vs. 13%). Also, there were more highly educated (college graduates or higher) elected officials than those with lower educational levels (61 vs. 34%). There were more officials with moderate to moderately high annual household incomes (equal to or greater than \$50,000) than those with lower annual household incomes (69 vs. 20%). Officials who had been in office 10 years or less were more than those who had been in office longer (66 vs. 34%). The mean number of years that the respondents had been in office or held position was ten years (not shown in Table). Obviously, there is disproportionate representation by gender, race, age, income, and tenure. Apart from tenure, which had disproportionate representation on the lower end of the spectrum, the other factors generally had disproportionate representation at the higher end of the spectrum. In the case of gender, traditionally, there has been more male elected officials than female elected officials; in the case of race, the spread is not surprising as the percentage of Blacks are generally higher in the Black Belt than Whites.

Table 1. Socioeconomic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	28	73.7
Female	10	26.3
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	29	76.3
White	8	21.1
Hispanic	1	2.6
Age		
25-34	2	5.3
35-44	3	7.9
45-54	8	21.1
55-64	12	31.6
65 and above	13	34.2
Education		
Two-Year/Technical	4	10.5
Some College	9	23.7
College Degree	10	26.3
Post-Graduate/Prof. Degree	13	34.2
No Response	2	5.3
Income		
\$19,999 or less	1	2.6
\$20,000-29,999	3	7.9
\$30,000-39,999	3	7.9
\$40,000-49,999	1	2.6
\$50,000-59,999	11	28.9
\$60,000-69,999	5	13.2
\$70,000-79,999	1	2.6
\$80,000 and above	9	23.7
No Response	4	10.5
Tenure		
5 years or below	17	44.7
6-10 years	8	21.1
11-15 years	3	7.9
16-20 years	4	10.5
Over 20 years	6	15.8

Table 2 shows responses on situational attributes (or leadership styles). The officials were presented with a situational statement that indicated: “the members of your staff in your department or organization usually are able to take responsibility, but recently, they are not responding to your new standards of excellence.” When respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to Instruct, or direct staff members to improve the situation described above, 11% said somewhat likely; 40% said likely, and 46% said most likely. Also, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to persuade or convince staff members to improve the situation, again 11% answered somewhat likely; 40% answered likely, and 47% answered most likely. In addition, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to encourage staff members to “buy-in” to improve the situation, 11% indicated somewhat likely; 42% indicated likely, and 47% indicated most likely.

Table 2. Situational Attribute (Leadership Style) Responses

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Instruct, or Direct		
(Telling)		
Not Likely	1	2.6
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	18	47.4
Persuade or Convince		
(Selling)		
Not Likely	1	2.6
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	18	47.4
Buy-in		
(Participating)		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	16	42.1
Most Likely	18	47.4
Authority for Flexibility and Creativity		
(Delegating)		
Not Likely	0	7.9
Likely	3	18.4
Somewhat Likely	16	42.1
Most Likely	12	31.6
Demand Directives be Carried Out		
(Autocratic)		
Not Likely	5	13.2
Likely	6	15.8
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	12	31.6
Defer to Majority Opinion		
(Democratic)		
Not Likely	3	7.9
Likely	9	23.7
Somewhat Likely	20	52.6
Most Likely	6	15.8

When respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to relinquish some authority for flexibility and creativity to improve the situation, 18% answered somewhat likely; 42% answered likely, and 31% answered most likely. Furthermore, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to demand that what they wanted must be done because they said so to improve the situation, 16% indicated somewhat likely; 40% indicated likely, and 32% indicated most likely. Lastly, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to defer to majority opinion to improve the situation, 24% stated somewhat likely; 53% stated likely, and 16% stated most likely. These six sets of questions and/or responses correspond, respectively, with telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles. The most dominant leadership style (based on likely and most likely) is the participating leadership style, 90%; followed by the telling leadership style and selling leadership style, both were 87%; delegating leadership style, 74%; autocratic leadership style, 71%, and democratic leadership style, 68%. Since these were high ratings (i.e., greater than 68%), there seems to be multiple leadership styles at work among the respondents; a possible case of situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993).

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the regression analysis. The minimum and maximum values for the leadership styles were, respectively, 1.000 and 4.000, and the mean values ranged from 2.763 to 3.368. Moreover, the minimum and maximum values for the socioeconomic factors were, respectively, 0.500 and 32.000, and the mean values ranged from 0.737 to 9.910. Table 4 shows the multiple regression results between socioeconomic factors and leadership styles. The first result reflects the relationship

between the socioeconomic factors and the telling leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.338, -0.201, -0.210, -0.133, 0.262, and -0.064 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Gender had the most relative impact, followed by household income, age, race, education, and tenure. Household income had a positive impact on telling leadership style. This seems to suggest that household income enhances the telling leadership style; particularly, the higher the household income, the more telling leadership style is enhanced. However, gender, race, age, education, and tenure had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the telling leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials may use less of the telling leadership style; and for race, it may mean that Black elected officials may use more of the telling leadership style. For age, education, and tenure, the interpretations are straight forward; the higher the age, education, and tenure, the less the telling leadership style is used.

The second result depicts the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the selling leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.419, 0.164, -0.332, 0.011, 0.242, and -0.152 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Gender had the most relative impact, followed by age, household income, race, tenure, and education. Race, education, and household income had a positive impact on selling leadership style. This seems to suggest that race, education, and household income enhance the selling leadership style. Specifically, for race, it may mean that White elected officials use more of the selling leadership style. For education and household income it means that the higher these factors the more the selling leadership style is used. However, gender, age, and tenure had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the selling leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials use less of the selling leadership style. For age and tenure, it may imply that the higher these factors are, the more the selling leadership style is depressed or the less it is used.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
GEN	38	0.00	1.00	0.737	0.446
RAC	38	1.00	3.00	1.263	0.503
AGE	38	2.00	6.00	4.816	1.159
EDU	38	0.00	4.00	2.737	1.201
HHI	38	0.00	8.00	4.842	2.574
TEN	38	0.50	32.00	9.910	8.983
TEL	38	1.00	4.00	3.316	0.775
SEL	38	1.00	4.00	3.316	0.775
PAR	38	2.00	4.00	3.368	0.675
DEL	38	1.00	4.00	2.974	0.915
AUT	38	1.00	4.00	2.895	1.008
DEM	38	1.00	4.00	2.763	0.820
CLS	38	1.17	4.00	3.109	0.566

The third result presents the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the participating leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, 0.093, -0.069, 0.021, 0.0741, 0.211, and -0.080 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Household income had the most relative impact, followed by gender, tenure, education, race, and tenure. Gender, age, education, and household income had a positive impact on the participating leadership style. This means that gender, age, education, and household income enhance the participating leadership style. Particularly, female elected officials are more apt to use the participating leadership style. For age, education, and household income, it means the higher these factors are, the more the participating leadership style is used. However, race and tenure had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the participating leadership style. For race, it may mean that Black elected officials may use less of the participating leadership style; and for tenure, it may mean that the longer the length of time in office, the less the participating leadership style is used.

The fourth result shows the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the delegating leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.408, 0.058, -0.102, 0.096, 0.122, and -0.180 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Gender had the most relative impact, followed by tenure, household income, age, education, and race. Race, education, and household income had a positive impact on delegating leadership style. This implies that race, education, and household income enhance the delegating leadership style. Specifically, for race, it may mean that White elected officials use the delegating leadership style more. For education and household income, it may mean the higher these factors are, the more the delegating leadership style is used. However, gender, age, and tenure had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the delegating leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials may use less of the delegating leadership style. For age and tenure, it may mean that the higher these factors are, the less the delegating leadership style is used.

Table 4. Relationship between Socioeconomic Factors and Leadership Styles

Variable	Beta Weight
Socioeconomic Factors/Telling Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.338
Race	-0.201
Age	-0.210
Education	-0.133
Household Income	0.262
Tenure	-0.064
Socioeconomic Factors/Selling Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.419
Race	0.164
Age	-0.332
Education	0.011
Household Income	0.242
Tenure	-0.152
Socioeconomic Factors/Participating Leadership Style	
Gender	0.093
Race	-0.069
Age	0.021
Education	0.074
Household Income	0.211
Tenure	-0.080
Socioeconomic Factors/Delegating Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.408
Race/Ethnicity	0.058
Age	-0.102
Education	0.096
Household Income	0.122
Tenure	-0.180
Socioeconomic Factors/Autocratic Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.241
Race	-0.070
Age	-0.344
Education	-0.134
Household Income	0.115
Tenure	0.259
Socioeconomic Factors/Democratic Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.382
Race	0.240
Age	-0.174
Education	-0.140
Household Income	0.023
Tenure	-0.296
Socioeconomic Factors/Combined Leadership Style	
Gender	-0.531
Race	0.075
Age	-0.299
Education	-0.064
Household Income	0.217
Tenure	-0.152

The fifth result reflects the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the autocratic leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.241, -0.070, -0.344, -0.134, 0.115, and 0.259 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Age had the most relative impact, followed by tenure, gender, education, household income, and race. Household income and tenure had a positive impact the autocratic leadership style. This means that household income and tenure enhance the autocratic leadership style. Particularly, the higher the household income or the length of time an elected official has been in office, the more the autocratic leadership style is used. However, gender, race, age, and education had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the autocratic leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials may use less of the autocratic leadership style; and for race, it may mean that Black elected

officials may use more of the autocratic leadership style. For age and education, the higher these factors are, the less the autocratic leadership style is used.

The sixth result depicts the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the democratic leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.382, 0.240, -0.174, -0.140, 0.023, and -0.296 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Gender had the most relative impact, followed by tenure, race, age, education, and household income. Race and household income had a positive impact on the democratic leadership style. This seems to suggest that race and household income enhance the democratic leadership style. Specifically, for race, it may mean that White elected officials use more of the democratic leadership style; for household income, it means the higher the household income, the more the democratic leadership style is used. However, gender, age, education, and tenure had a negative impact. This means that the latter socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the democratic leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials may use less of the democratic leadership style. For

age, education, and tenure, it implies the higher these factors are, the more the democratic leadership style is used.

The seventh result shows the relationship between the socioeconomic factors and the composite leadership style. The beta coefficients were, respectively, -0.531, 0.075, -0.299, -0.064, 0.217, and -0.152 for gender, race, age, education, household income, and tenure. Gender had the most relative impact, followed by age, household income, tenure, race, and education. Race and household income had a positive impact on the composite leadership style. This seems to suggest that race and household income enhance the composite leadership style. Particularly, for race, it may imply that White elected officials use more of the composite leadership style; for household income, it implies that the higher the household income, the more the composite leadership style is used. However, gender, age, education, and tenure had a negative impact. This means that these socioeconomic factors may depress or minimize the composite leadership style. For gender, it may mean that female elected officials may use less of the composite leadership style. For age, education, and tenure, it means that the higher these factors are, the less the composite leadership style is used. Especially, in the cases of gender, age, and tenure it is not surprising as these three clearly enhance single leadership styles, gender for participating, age for participating, and tenure for autocratic; this will be expanded on later.

From the above then, on the positive side, gender had a positive impact on (enhanced) the participating leadership style; race had a positive impact on the selling, delegating, and democratic leadership styles; age had a positive impact on the participating leadership style, education had a positive impact on the selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles; household income had a positive impact on all the leadership styles, and tenure had a positive impact on the autocratic leadership style. On the negative side, gender had a negative impact on (depressed) the telling, selling, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles; race had a negative impact on the telling, participating, and autocratic leadership styles; age had a negative impact on the telling, selling, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles; education had a negative impact on the telling, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles; household income did not have a negative impact on any of the leadership styles, and tenure had a negative impact on the telling, selling, participating, delegating, and democratic leadership styles (Table 5).

In sum, based on the above, for gender, it suggests that females may use more of the participating leadership style than the other leadership styles. For race, it suggests that Whites may prefer using more of the selling, delegating, and democratic leadership styles. Considering age, older officials may prefer using more of the participating leadership style. Focusing on education, more educated officials may prefer using more of the selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles. In reference to household income, those who have higher household income are more apt to use all of the leadership styles. Regarding tenure, longer-term serving officials may prefer using more of the autocratic leadership style. The opposite or counter argument can be made for what leadership styles are used less regarding the socioeconomic factors.

Table 5. Socioeconomic Factors and Signs on Leadership Styles

Variable	Sign (+)
Gender	Participating
Race	Selling, Delegating, Democratic
Age	Participating
Education	Selling, Participating, Delegating
Household Income	Telling, Selling, Participating, Delegating, Autocratic, Democratic
Tenure	Autocratic

Variable	Sign (-)
Gender	Telling, Selling, Delegating, Autocratic, Democratic
Race	Telling, Participating, Autocratic
Age	Telling, Selling, Delegating, Autocratic, Democratic
Education	Telling, Autocratic, Democratic
Household Income	None
Tenure	Telling, Selling, Participating, delegating, Democratic

Since the relative impacts of each of the socioeconomic factors appears six times and the sign magnitudes appear six times (in reference to the particular leadership styles), a sign grid or table was also developed for them (Table 6). It confirms that household income enhances all the leadership styles; all the six signs were positive. Correspondingly, gender, age, and tenure depress the leadership styles the most; five of the six signs were negative in each case.

Table 6. Magnitude (and number) of Socioeconomic Factors on Leadership Styles

Variable	Positive (number of times)	Negative (number of times)
Gender	1	5
Race	4	2
Age	1	5
Education	3	3
Household Income	6	0
Tenure	1	5

5. Conclusion

The study assessed the relationship between socioeconomic factors and leadership styles in selected counties of the Alabama Black Belt. Particularly, it identified and described socioeconomic factors; identified, described and assessed leadership styles, and examined the relative impact or importance of socioeconomic factors on leadership styles. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 38 locally elected officials, and analyzed by using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

The results showed that there were more male than female elected officials; more Black officials than White elected officials; a higher proportion of older than younger officials; more college educated officials than otherwise; more officials earning \$50,000 or more than otherwise, and more officials with 10 years or less tenure than otherwise. The ratings for the leadership styles were relatively high (68% or higher). The most dominant leadership style was the participating leadership style; followed by telling leadership style and selling leadership style, and then delegating leadership style, autocratic leadership style, and democratic leadership style. The results also showed that gender had an enhancing effect only on the participating leadership style. Race had enhancing effects on the selling, delegating, and democratic leadership styles. Age had an enhancing effect on the participating leadership style. Education had enhancing effects on the selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles. Household income had enhancing effects on all the leadership styles. Tenure had an enhancing effect on the autocratic leadership style.

Based on the results, several inferences can be made. First, since the ratings for leadership styles were relatively high, there may be a confluence of leadership styles at play; that is, the officials may be more likely using more than one leadership style at a time. Second, that females use more of the participating leadership style than the other styles. Third, Whites may prefer using more of the selling, delegating, and democratic leadership styles. Fourth, older officials may prefer using more of the participating leadership style. Fifth, more educated

officials may prefer using more of the selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles. Sixth, those who have higher household incomes are more prone to using all of the leadership styles. Seventh and final, those who have longer tenures use more of the autocratic leadership style. Future studies are needed to validate the results of the study, and should include increasing the sample size.

Acknowledgment

This study was funded by USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Capacity Building Grant, Number 2012-38821-20072.

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