

Original Paper

Democratic Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment of Academic Staff in Uganda Christian University and Kyambogo University

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Received: August 17, 2023

Accepted: August 29, 2023

Online Published: September 7, 2023

doi:10.22158/grhe.v6n3p50

URL:<http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/grhe.v6n3p50>

Abstract

The study establishes the extent to which democratic leadership styles influence organizational commitment of academic staff in Uganda Christian University (UCU) and Kyambogo Universities (KYU). It was guided by three specific objectives; to establish the status of democratic leadership style, status of organisational commitment and finally the influence of democratic leadership style on organisational commitment of academic staff in UCU and KYU. The study utilized Contingence theory of leadership to extensively discuss the democratic leadership style. It was a descriptive cross-sectional survey design hinged on Plato's deductive reasoning philosophy. The population involved lecturers, heads of departments and deans. These were sampled using simple and purposive random sampling. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide. Data was analysed at Univariate level using descriptive statistics means and standard deviations. Study hypothesis was analysed using Pearson's Correlation Co-efficient index. Results revealed an insignificant relationship between democratic leadership style and commitment of academic staff. This study provides at least a facie evidence of how democratic leadership style should be devised to ensure organisation commitment of academic staff. The leaders continued efforts should improve work condition, ensure satisfaction and act in ways that increase loyalty of academic staff to their institutions.

Keywords

leadership styles, democratic, organisational commitment, lecturers, Universities, Uganda

1. Introduction

Globally, Universities are expected to serve the societies through the creation and assimilation of knowledge, educate young minds through empowering them with knowledge and sense of responsibility. In order to achieve this, academic staff commitment is considered as one of the reliable and sustainable predictor. This is why academic staff commitment has become an essentiality. One of the determinants of organizational mismanagement is inadequate staff organizational commitment, which is normally characterized by scanty loyalty to the organization, and insufficient job commitment (Mullins, 2002). This view resonated well with (IGG Report, 2015, 09) who reported that, in the developing world, academic staff organizational commitment has often been alleged to be substantially wanting, something that is still a challenge, even in Uganda's Universities. Yet, effective leadership is critical to the achievement of performance targets/goals and objectives in any institution. However, there was no empirical study carried out to establish the influence of democratic leadership style on organizational commitment of academic staff in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities in Uganda which this current study did.

Theoretically, the study was guided by the Contingency Theory of leadership developed by Fred Fiedler in 1958. This theory states that; there is no one better way to leadership and different situations require leaders to apply different ways of leadership (Arenas, Connelly & Williams, 2017). Therefore, the leader should be able to identify the best leadership style amongst a list of many to achieve the organizations goals in each situation (Shala, Prebraza & Ramosaj, 2021). In a situation where staff are highly experienced, participative, and qualified, a democratic leadership style should be applied to enlist commitment of academic staff.

Conceptually, Tomislav (2015) defined democratic leadership style as a style of leadership where one is allowed to participate and amicably arrive at organizational decisions. It is a delegation of responsibility among group members, empowerment of group members and assistance provided by group members through the decision making functions (Terzi & Berin, 2016). Alternatively, organizational commitment according to Abdulkadir et al. (2018) and Abasilim, Gberevbie & Osibanjo (2019), is the degree to which employees identify with their organization and add value to accomplish the set goals and objectives. Meyer and Allen (1984) suggested a three component model of commitment that involves affective, continuance and normative commitments. These components were used to characterize academic staff's organisational commitment to the universities where this current study was done.

High levels of organisational commitment are necessary for better institutional task execution. In Uganda this commitment ensures the delivery of high-quality university education (NCHE, 2018). When university lecturers have a strong sense of organisational commitment, this is partially possible. However, reports surfaced indicating that lecturers were unwilling to work during hard times, disrespected the university's values, occasionally perpetrated professional misconduct, and some left in

search of greener pastures elsewhere (IGG, 2015). The aforementioned problems serve as examples of minimal commitment within the organisation. Mugizi et al. (2019) reported a comparable situation in Ugandan private higher education institutions, where academic staff commitment was said to be low. These academics argued that signs of waning passion and drive among faculty members at private universities included threats of strikes, tardiness in marking exams, and, surprisingly, the falsification of student grades. While a number of factors have been proposed by multiple investigations to account for the low organisational commitment of academic staff in Ugandan universities, these attempts appear to have stayed unrealistic, since the democratic leadership style seems to have been overlooked, despite the fact that it is also said to have a consequence on staff organisational commitment in these establishments. It was projected that universities would continue to provide a significant but peripheral contribution to sustainable socio-economic development if this tendency persisted. This study consequently aimed to determine how organisational commitment at KYU and UCU related to democratic leadership style.

2. Methodology

The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design hinged on Plato's deductive reasoning philosophy. A sample consisted 280 lectures and 20 head of departments and deans. These were sampled using simple and purposive random sampling. The sample size was determined using using the Krejcie & Morgan's *Table for Determining Samples*, 1970. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide. The scale consists of 6 items for democratic leadership and 6 items for organisational commitment. These are scaled on 5 point Likert scale denoted as 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Not sure, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. Content Validity Index was calculated that produced 0.92 coefficient. Reliability of the scale was measured using the Cronbach's Alpha computations. The alpha was found at $\alpha=0.86$. The overall item correlations varied from 0.75-0.89. This data was analysed at Univariate level using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The study hypothesis was analysed using Pearson's Correlation Co-efficient index.

3. Results

3.1 Objective One: Status of Democratic Leadership Style among Academic Staffs in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities

Table 1. Results on Democratic Leadership Style

<i>Indicators Of Democratic Style</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.Dev</i>
Employees want to be part of decision making process	4.297	0.884
Providing guidance without pressure is the way to bring out a good leader	4.314	0.747
Most workers want frequent and supportive communication from their leaders	4.446	0.762
Leaders need to support subordinates accept responsibility for completing their work	3.850	0.984
It is the leader job to help subordinates find their passion	3.263	1.246
People are basically competent if given a task they will do a good job	3.527	1.102

Table 1 results showed that the means were ranging in 4 on most items about leadership styles applied. This meant that democratic leadership style was somehow effectively applied on academic staff in UCU and Kyambogo Universities.

3.2 Objective Two: Status of Academic Staff Organizational Commitment of Academic Staffs in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities

Table 2. Summary Results on Organizational Commitment (Affective, Normative and Continuance)

Commitment		Statistics
95% confidence interval for mean	Lower bound	3.246
	Upper bound	3.446
Mean		3.346
Median		3.533
Std. deviation		0.772
Skewness		-.421

Table 2 shows that the average mean was 3.346. This mean value was almost equal to code 3 which equaled to 3 neutrals. It hence suggested that the commitment of academic staff in UCU and Kyambogo Universities was fair.

3.3 Objective Three: Extent to which Democratic Leadership Style Influences Organizational Commitment of Academic Staff in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities

Table 3. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Showing Relationship between Democratic Leadership Style and Commitment of Academic Staff

		Commitment	Democratic
Commitment	Pearson correlation	1	0.116
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.078
	N	234	233
Democratic	Pearson correlation	0.116	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.078	
	N	233	234

Table 3. Shows Pearson's correlation coefficient results $r=0.116$, $sig=0.078$ less than 0.05. This suggests that there was an insignificant correlation between democratic leadership style and commitment of academic staff. It suggests that even if democratic leadership is fairly done or not the level of organizational commitment remains intact.

4. Discussion

The study investigated the status of democratic commitment and found out that majority of study participants agreed at participating in decision-making. It implies that academic staff attached a lot of meaning to participating in the matters that concern them. The mean value was also close to code 4-Agree suggesting an agreement that lecturers wanted to be part and partial. This suggested that employees in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian University Mukono prefer to engage in the processes of making decisions. The standard deviation of 0.884 was low implying the respondents had common views regarding being part and partial of decision making in the university. In addition, democratic leadership is associated with sensitivity and caring with assumptions that all people like responsibility, they are self-motivated and trust worthy (Jones et al., 2016). When such qualities are apparent in the academic staff, democratic leadership styles would foster teamwork, motivation, commitment, satisfaction and high performance. Results from other studies on similar constructs are also revealing. For instance, Fiaz et al. (2017) analysed leadership styles and motivation and the analysis's findings showed that there is no conclusive evidence to demonstrate a link between democratic management methods and employee motivation.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that an effective leader must be able to give direction without being overbearing. The finding suggested that respondents had agreed that guidance provision is the being of leader. The subordinates can easily determine who is their good or bad leader on their jobs basing on the extent they offer guidance to their sub-ordinates. Additionally, the majority of research participants agreed that most lecturers want their leaders to communicate with them frequently and supportively. This indicates that lectures favour leaders who communicate with them frequently and in a positive manner. Democratic leadership is greatly responsible for high sense of employee commitment on the job since leadership allow participation of employees in whatever is happening on the job leading to a high sense of job commitment (Takroun & Alsharqi 2021). Academic staff agreed that head of departments and deans must help workers accept responsibility for finishing their work. It is therefore paramount for leaders to encourage lectures to take ownership of completing their work. When exposed to democratic leadership style, workers acquire a strong commitment to their work which categorically differed from the results reported by this research (Abulle, 2011).

The third objective of the study was to establish the relationship between democratic leadership style and the commitment of academic staff in UCU and Kyambogo Universities. Results obtained from Pearson's correlation coefficient index revealed that there was an insignificant correlation between

democratic leadership style and employee performance in the two universities. These results revealed that even if democratic leadership style is applied, the commitment of employees in the two universities remain constant. These findings were in direct agreement with earlier studies like Al-Kareidi (2010) who investigated the influence of democratic leadership style on organizational commitment, and established that this leadership styles had an insignificant relationship on organizational commitment involved three dimensions affective, normative, and continuous affective commitment. To enhance the organizational commitment of employees/academic staff in Kyambogo and Uganda Christian University Mukono, the university council in the two universities, faculty administrative boards, deans, departmental heads should devise means of improving work conditions, ensure satisfaction and act in ways that increase loyalty of academic staff to their institutions.

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