

APPRAISAL OF THE NEXUS BETWEEN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY CRISIS IN NIGERIA

Rose Eyefujinrin EBOHON, Ph.D

eborose123@gmail.com

Department of Adult and Non-formal Education

School of Early Childhood Care, Primary, Adult and Non-formal Education

Federal University of Education, Kontagora, Niger State

Abstract

All over the world, there is nothing as elusive as leadership. Good leadership cannot be inherited. It is rather a manifestation of some skills in all facets of our daily living. There is a strong need for true leadership in our communities and government. The complexity and uncertainty of leadership in the 21st century have plunged communities in Nigeria into terrorism, economic uncertainty, health epidemics, religious conflict, poverty, moral and ethical challenges, cultural and communal clashes. The paper, therefore, appraised the nexus between community leadership and community crisis. The author concluded that leadership is an activity in which the leader directs, guides, influences and controls the followers to achieve some goals through socio-psychological processes. The paper suggests among others that genuine leadership is not a result of memorizing of formulas, skills, methods or techniques, but an innate attitude that flows from a process of socio-psychology.

Keywords: Appraisal, Community, Leadership, Crisis, Nexus

Introduction

A community can be described or explained to be a physical place where people connect geographically or a virtual space such as a social media group or private community platform. Community brings together like-minded people with similar characteristics and common interests. In most cases, these common interests are established or enshrined in community laws and customs. This is because every community has its customs, traditions (dos and don'ts) and so for the people to succeed and remain strengthened, community

members must work for the common interest of the community as against personal interest.

This may, however, not be possible if the community lacks selfless leadership. In other words, leadership is a major determinant of the extent to which a community can achieve communal objectives. This explains why Munroe, cited in Akinyele, and Fasogbon, (2020) stated that an army of sheep led by a lion will always defeat an army of lion led by a sheep. This is simply because a community is very

much likely to move in the kind of direction established by its leaders. In other words, the body language of a leader as represented by his knowledge, managerial skills and abilities determines to a large extent, the success or failure as well as the strength or weakness of the community he leads.

The quality of leadership in a community influences the level of development in the community. This emphasizes the imperative of ensuring that the existence of quality leadership in every community if the developmental efforts of these community are to achieve maximum results. There are diverse human and materials resources available in all communities. The ability to mobilize and utilize the resources through effective leadership for development purpose rests on the leadership provided. Hence, according to Emecheta, Nwokorie and Ogbonna, (2021), a community endowed with resources cannot experience meaningful progress or sustained improvement in its members' quality of life if those resources remain unexploited and undeveloped. Community leadership is ordinarily expected to serve as a strong the link between the people, government, non-governmental organizations and agencies. Through this means, a bond is created between the community and other governmental and non-governmental institutions, thereby ensuring that the needs of the community are regularly met. It is also the responsibility of the community leaders to selflessly and skillfully manage community resources in such a way that it does not degenerate into crisis situations.

In addition, community leaders are expected to motivate their people to achieve planned developmental programmes and identified developmental objectives. Most communities have set goals and most of

them revolve around corporate development and the formation of strong ties amongst community members. These goals spill over into meaningful contributions to other communities that may be less fortunate. Community leaders play important roles in the attainment of these goals. It is the inability of community leaders to play the roles expected of them towards the development of their community coupled with indifference towards conflicts and emerging signs of crises that serves as an invitation to full-blown crises. This automatically places the community on the reverse side of development.

Concept of Leadership: Leadership is the process of influencing, guiding, and directing individuals or groups toward achieving a common goal. It is a crucial factor in shaping the direction, productivity, and culture of an organization or society. Leadership involves not only the possession of authority, but also the ability to inspire and motivate others to willingly contribute to the success of a shared vision.

Leadership has been defined in various ways by scholars. For instance, Northouse (2022) describes it as the process of influencing people to achieve a desired outcome. This definition emphasizes the relational and dynamic aspects of leadership, where leaders interact with followers to inspire change. Similarly, Okechukwu, Adewale and Umeh (2022) define leadership as the ability to effectively manage resources and mobilize individuals to foster collective growth, emphasizing its relevance in developing nations. The core elements of leadership include vision, communication, influence, adaptability, and accountability. Leaders must possess these traits to

effectively guide their teams or communities toward achieving goals.

Leadership plays a critical role in national development. The country's diverse cultural, political, and socio-economic landscape significantly influences leadership styles and practices. Leadership in Nigeria is often categorized by a mix of traditional and modern approaches, shaped by indigenous values and global influences. For example, Akinyele and Fasogbon (2021) argue that effective leadership in Nigeria must balance the hierarchical structures commonly found in organizations with the need for transformational leadership to address contemporary challenges. This is particularly relevant in public sector organizations, where effective leadership is critical to overcoming issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and resource mismanagement.

Leadership goes far beyond the mechanics of most of the approaches that pervade our leadership programmes today. It has more to do with discovering a sense of meaning and significance in life. This distinction separates the leadership quality of passion from the hunger or lust for power. Real leaders do not seek power but are driven by passion to achieve a noble cause. Today, the world over there is need for true leadership ability. There is leadership crisis globally. There is no more quality, moral, disciplined and principle-centred leadership. It will be recalled that leadership is not the result of study or ordination, position or power. Man is essentially a spirit being, and the nature of a person's spirit dictates the nature that he or she manifests. Until and unless a person is changed from the minor spirited mind, the person is unchanged. Leadership, therefore, begins in the inner mind of a person, once this is done, leadership comes alive. It produces an

attitude that has the instinct and capacity for leadership, but most people seem not to have the time and courage to cultivate these potentials in them.

According to Onyeisi and Okafor (2023), leadership is the ability to get things done with the assistance and co-operation of other people within the institution, organization or system. It consists of interpersonal influence, exercised in a process towards the attainment of specified goal or goals. For a true leader to emerge there must be some of these unique attitudes or qualities which must include among others passion, initiative, teamwork, innovation, persistence, discipline, focus, time management, confidence, positive disposition, patience, peace and compassion.

Leadership Style

Every group has a leadership structure. A leader in a group is a person who can influence other members of the group and make them work towards the accomplishment of the group goals and objectives. Leadership style refers to the behavioural patterns and strategies that leaders adopt to guide, influence, and manage their followers to achieve specific goals. It encompasses the leader's approach to decision-making, motivation, and communication. Leadership style is a critical determinant of organizational success, as it influences employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity.

Leadership style is often influenced by cultural, political, and socio-economic factors. Studies have shown that traditional leadership approaches, such as autocratic styles, are still prevalent in Nigerian organizations due to hierarchical structures and cultural norms (Emecheta et al., 2021). However, there is a growing shift towards

transformational leadership in response to the globalized economy and the need for innovation. For instance, Akinyele and Fasogbon (2020) find that transformational leadership significantly improves employee engagement and organizational outcomes in Nigerian banks.

Globally, leadership styles vary depending on cultural dimensions. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory highlights how national cultures influence leadership practices. For instance, in high power distance cultures like Nigeria, leaders are more likely to adopt directive approaches. Conversely, in low power distance cultures such as Sweden, participative leadership styles are more common (Hofstede, Lippitt, & White, 2019). The effectiveness of leadership styles also depends on organizational contexts and individual differences among team members.

Effective leadership styles foster a positive work environment, drive innovation, and enhance organizational performance. There are different leadership styles that a leader can exhibit or adopt in the process of providing leadership for common goal achievement. This can be depicted in the way in which the leader carries out his leadership functions. The frequently used leadership styles are elucidated below.

Autocratic: A very typical, traditional understanding of what is leadership is often the idea of leader who has complete control over his team. They are known as autocratic leaders. This type of leader never bends his beliefs and rules for anyone. Furthermore, their team members have no say in the business of decision-making as they do not tolerate or accommodate followers' ideas in decision-making.

Democratic: In democratic or participative leadership, the team members and the leader

equally contribute to actualizing community goals. Moreover, they work together and motivate each other to achieve their personal goals too. Democratic leaders value the input and participation of all members of a group or organization. They actively encourage discussions, listen to diverse perspectives, and involve members in decision-making processes. This inclusivity promotes a sense of belonging and respect, which can enhance group cohesion and morale. By fostering a collaborative environment, democratic leaders encourage creativity and innovation. Team members are motivated to think critically and propose new ideas, knowing their contributions will be valued and considered.

Bureaucratic: In this type of leadership style, the team members adhere to organizational rules and policies in view of the leader doing the same. Leaders in this category are often organized and self-motivated. They adhere strictly to rules and regulations, focused on order and discipline, rely on expertise and qualifications, impartial decision-making, places emphasis on documentation and record-keeping and resistant to change

Laissez-faire: In this type of leadership, the leader gives their team members the opportunity and freedom to perform their job according to their will. In essence, they can rely on their perspective and perform business functions subsequently. He cares less about what happens in the group and the extent of group goals achievement.

Empathetic: A more modern alternative to understanding what leadership is; is the emergency of empathetic leaders. They prioritize understanding their team's feelings and perspectives, thus considering their team members' feelings and perspectives in decision making and task assignment, thus

creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that boosts morale and productivity.

Leadership is very important in the social set-up as the leaders help keep their communities safe from anything that threatens their well-being. They have the responsibility of protecting their communities from dangers and those factors that retard development. They also work together with the communities/ the people to eradicate crime. They have an individual and collective sense that they can positively influence each other and the environments they are in. With the right leadership, the impact can be monumental until we have healthy communities that live in harmony with each other. Thriving communities have a positive effect on the image of a nation. Once there are strong communities across nations, love will be restored, there will be peace and harmony to the entire world and humanity will become better for it.

Community leaders are persons most knowledgeable about their people's needs, and the best advisers on what approaches best suit their area. They can engage individuals and organizations without compromising the integrity and value system of the community. There has never been a time where there it is more imperative for community leaders to rise like the present moment, where there is leadership crisis globally. They need to ensure the safety and survival of the people in their communities. We need leaders who provide support to those affected by the present economic hardship. It is the role of community leaders to come together from their different spheres to provide spiritual, psychological and financial support for their people. Community leadership happens when community foundations move beyond grant

making and act as valuable partners that drive positive change in the areas they serve.

Importance of Community Leadership

Community leadership is very important in the world over because they encourage and create room for creativity and capacity to improve participation, development and sustainability for the communities which they represent. As leaders who work or operate in an environment, their interactions with others help form strong social ties with people who have like minds. Not minding the diversity/peculiarity, it is important to realize the role leadership plays in maintaining and giving directions in each community.

The importance of community leadership lies in its ability to ensure success, especially in these difficult times. According to Akinyele, and Fasogbon, (2021), they should strive to assist their people in recognizing the challenges preventing their progress as a community and work towards resolving these issues. They must also lead their people to appreciate the fact that success can only be achieved when they willingly work together to achieve their set goals. Community leaders must make sure that the generality of their people is involved in the planning, execution, utilization and assessment of any project designed to improve their standard of living and general well-being. Leadership is even more critical for success in a smaller environment.

Roles of Leadership in Bringing Development to their Domains

They offer Direction: Community leadership provides a road map for future, a compelling vision that unites the people. The lack of this can result in the community

struggling consequently because they are unsure of their goals.

They Instill Motivation: They know how to ignite a spark to cultivate enthusiasm. They can take a team from simply doing their jobs to believing in the purpose of their community.

They Simplify Decision-making: Community leaders know that it is crucial to make clear and strategic decisions to solve pressing problems. They help teams navigate through obstacles and devise innovative solution

They Manage Changes: This is another reason why community leadership is important. It helps to navigate changing effectively, especially when the world is evolving constantly. It becomes critical to transition smoothly and embrace new opportunities.

Community leadership must help to lead the people to imbibe the spirit of self-help. In this vain, it must work in close association with the community structure.

Some Necessary Qualities of a Good Leader

Integrity: Leaders value virtuousness and honesty. Furthermore, they also surround themselves with like-minded people who believe in them and their vision

Vision: What is leadership without the vision for community growth? Leaders, therefore, need to be visionaries. They must have a clear idea of what they want and how to achieve it. This is essential to steer their community to the path of success.

Inspiration: Leaders are self-motivating, and this makes them great influencers. They are a good inspiration to their team members and help others to understand their role in a bigger context.

Communication Skills: Leaders must possess great communication skills to enable

their team members to understand their vision. They are transparent with their team and share failures and successes with them.

Resilience: Leaders do challenge the status quo. Hence, they never give up easily. They also have unique ways to solve problems.

Empathy: A leader should be an emotional and empathetic fellow because it will help them develop a strong bond with their team. Empathy will help a leader address the problems, complaints and aspirations of their team members.

Fairness: Although empathy is an important quality a leader must imbibe, getting clouded by emotions while making an important community decision can be potentially problematic. Hence, a good leader should balance empathy with fairness.

Intelligence: The person who wants to lead must be intelligent enough to arrive at community solutions to difficult problems. Furthermore, a leader should be analytical and should weigh the pros and cons before making/taking a decision. This quality can be polished with an all-inclusive leadership training programme.

Creativity: An effective leader is also someone open to new ideas, possibilities, and perspective. They are always ready to listen, observe, and willing to change. They are also out-of-the-box thinkers and encourage their teams to do so.

Community Crisis

Crisis is a time of intense difficult or danger. It is unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome. A community crisis can also occur following a natural disaster, fire, flood, and disease outbreak, disagreement between people and between communities. This sometimes becomes very extremely challenging for the

people directly affected. Community crisis can happen at any time depending on how the community leadership handles the situation so as not to degenerate into a crisis situation.

Community is a very complex social entity which has physical locus and psychological consensus. As a result, they have basic operational unit or the activities centre of many human services to which all the participants in this filed constantly identity with and address themselves. Such human services as community development is related to the people's conditions and must meet aspirational needs of the communities. Projects must be built around the felt needs of the people living in the community. There must be adequate mobilization of people and resources for development at the community level. The absence of what has been discussed above brings about a community crisis.

Causes of Community Crisis

There are so many factors that can generate a crisis in a community. Such factors include:

1. Environmental Challenges
2. Healthcare Emergencies
3. Population Displacement
4. Hunger and Malnutrition
5. Lack of basic services
6. Youth Restiveness
7. Joblessness

The list is endless. But in all, the youth population of any community have a lot to do, in ensuring that the communities with their help can avoid crisis. According to Ebohon (2016), young people all over the world are very vital in the society they live. A disciplined, focused, and law-abiding youth can create a bright future for any nation. Conversely, lawless indulgent and violent youths are a great threat to

community peace and security. As a result of crises orchestrated by the young people, the safety of human lives and property has been significantly threatened. Community relationships are constantly being systematically and progressively destroyed. However, where community leaders can properly manage youth restiveness, peace, security and development are ascertained.

The Nexus

Community leadership and crises management are like conjoined twins. When we have poor leadership in a community, there is bound to be crises. Community crisis have become a global epidemic. The issues of moral integrity, honour, values, role models and respectable standards are topics of discussion on many new programmes, and they are also in the thoughts of the man on the street. We hear of leaders having sexual escapades, business magnates falling by the dozens to corruption. Countries and community leaders and their cabinet members are being tried by their governments for various forms of misconduct. Even traditional and religious leaders are abusing and misusing their authority and positions in order to take advantage of those whom they were entrusted to care for.

All that had been discussed in this paper concerning leadership, meaning and concept, leadership styles, the importance of community leadership and qualities of true leadership bring to the fore, that any, absence of the issues raised and discussed is a gateway to conflict and crisis.

Leadership is not always about people occupying higher ranks in organizations or communities, but they should be people who

are known for their beliefs and leadership ethics, passion and enthusiasm which they pass on to other members of the community to enable them to achieve their goals and objectives.

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that when there is an ineffective leadership structure in place, there is bound to be necessarily community crisis. On the other hand, where a leader is able to maximize his potential and manage his community competently, such a community will be devoid of crisis and there will be progress and development.

Conclusion

A committed and competent leader is better disposed to make rightful decisions, examine issues and stabilize things in his community. And so, effective and well-informed leaders remain the best foundation upon which the community and social growth, advancement and transformation rest. Therefore, it is very clear that no meaningful development can take place in a state of rancour.

Suggestions

For the effective nexus between community leadership and community crisis in our society the following recommendations are hereby proffered.

1. Government should establish regular training and capacity-building programmes for community leaders to enhance their skills in conflict resolution, negotiation, and leadership. These programmes can equip leaders with tools to identify potential crises early, mediate disputes, and foster inclusive decision-making processes.
2. Government should promote inclusive governance structures that involve all stakeholders, including women, youth,

and marginalized groups, in decision-making.

3. Security agencies should invest in early warning systems to monitor potential crises, such as resource disputes, economic downturns, or social unrest. A robust crisis management framework should also be established to ensure a swift and coordinated response when crises arise, minimizing their impact on development.
4. Non-Governmental Organisations and individuals should allocate financial resources and technical expertise to support community-driven development projects. This can empower communities to address the root causes of crises, such as unemployment or lack of infrastructure, and foster economic stability and resilience.
5. Community leaders should support programmes that promote peace building and social cohesion, such as inter-community dialogues, cultural exchange events, and collaborative projects.

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