

Leadership Style and Employee Motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200060>

Received: 08 February 2026; Accepted: 13 February 2026; Published: 24 February 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines leadership style and employee motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria, with a focus on identifying the dominant leadership style, key factors influencing employee motivation, and challenges affecting leadership performance. A mixed methods research design was adopted, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from 272 staff members across eight departments of AMAC using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with departmental heads. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis were employed for quantitative data, while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that delegation (*laissez-faire*) and participative (democratic) leadership styles are the most dominant in AMAC, while autocratic leadership is minimally practiced. Employee motivation is significantly influenced by leadership behaviors such as inclusion in decision-making, recognition, transparency, and support. However, major challenges undermining leadership effectiveness and employee motivation include corruption, workers' exclusion, ethnic and religious sentiment, and weak accountability systems. The study concludes that leadership style is a critical determinant of employee motivation and institutional performance in local government administration. It recommends improving leadership style toward a more transformational approach, timely financial obligations, career progression, and the adoption of ethical, participative, and employee-centered leadership practices to enhance employee motivation and improve service delivery in AMAC. The study contributes to public administration and leadership literature by providing empirical evidence from a Nigerian local government context.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Employee Motivation, Local Government, AMAC, Public Administration.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership style and employee motivation remain central themes in organizational studies due to their strong influence on productivity, job satisfaction, and institutional performance. Globally, organizations are increasingly recognizing that leadership style is not only about directing work but also about inspiring, empowering, and sustaining employee motivation in complex and competitive environments (Gazi *et al.*, 2024; Liden *et al.*, 2025; Taiwo, 2010). Contemporary leadership research emphasizes transformational, servant, ethical, and participative leadership as key drivers of intrinsic motivation, commitment, and innovation among employees (Clarke, 2025; Helalat *et al.*, 2025; Iqbal *et al.*, 2024). At the global level, studies have shown that leadership styles significantly shape employee attitudes, work engagement, and performance outcomes (Al-Harthi, 2025; Kasim, 2016; Uli *et al.*, 2020). In both public and private sector institutions, leaders who demonstrate fairness, support, and clear vision tend to foster higher levels of motivation and loyalty (Kumar *et al.*, 2025; Sankar Singh, 2025). Conversely, authoritarian and rigid leadership approaches often weaken morale and reduce employee commitment (Karakiliç, 2019; Yılmaz *et al.*, 2019). In the African context, leadership challenges are compounded by institutional constraints, bureaucratic systems, and resource limitations. Studies

across African public institutions indicate that leadership effectiveness plays a vital role in motivating civil servants and improving service delivery (Forson *et al.*, 2021; Maryadi *et al.*, 2026; Wako, 2025). Research in African municipalities shows that leadership styles such as participative and transformational leadership are associated with higher employee morale, accountability, and organizational citizenship behavior (Abegunde & Taiye Joshua, 2020; Aghahowa, 2021; Mukwawaya, 2025). In Nigeria, leadership style has been widely linked to issues of employee commitment, efficiency, and public sector performance. Nigerian public organizations face persistent challenges of low motivation, poor service delivery, and weak leadership practices (Baba Ibrahim, 2023; Mawoli *et al.*, 2020; Offem, 2021). Empirical studies in Nigeria suggest that leadership styles that emphasize inclusion, transparency, and support tend to improve employee motivation and organizational effectiveness (Nwachukwu, 2025; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024; Serunjogi *et al.*, 2025). At the local government level, such as the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), leadership style becomes even more critical due to direct interaction with grassroots employees and citizens. AMAC, as the largest and most strategic area council in the Federal Capital Territory, plays a key role in public service delivery. However, challenges such as staff absenteeism, low morale, limited commitment, and bureaucratic rigidity have raised concerns about leadership practices and employee motivation in the council (Abidemi & Omosefe, 2019; Mawoli *et al.*, 2020; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, examining the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) Abuja is both timely and necessary to understand how leadership practices can enhance performance and service delivery within Nigeria's local government system.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method was used to collect numerical data through structured questionnaires from civil servants in AMAC, while the qualitative method involved in-depth interviews with key departmental heads. The mixed methods approach enabled the study to obtain a broader and more comprehensive understanding of leadership styles and employee motivation by integrating statistical trends with rich descriptive insights.

The study was conducted in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), one of the six Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of all senior and junior staff of the eight (8) departments in AMAC Secretariat. According to the Human Resource Department of AMAC Secretariat, the total staff strength is about nine hundred and fifty (950) workers or more (Human Resource Department, AMAC, 2022). Therefore, 282 respondents were selected for the study.

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{950}{1 + 950(0.05)^2} = 282$$

Where:

N = Population size (950)

n = Sample size

e = Level of significance (0.05 at 95% confidence level)

A systematic sampling technique was used for questionnaire administration. The 282 respondents were proportionally distributed across the eight departments to ensure fair representation. Out of these, 272 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. Offices were counted in intervals of 1–8, and every 8th office was selected. Where an office was locked, the next available office was chosen. For the qualitative aspect, purposive sampling was used to select Heads of Departments and Directors for interview due to their administrative experience and in-depth knowledge of leadership practices in AMAC. For hypothesis testing, the Chi-Square (χ^2) method was used. The results obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics (simple percentages) with the aid of SPSS at 0.05 (95% confidence level).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demography Information of the Respondents.

Gender of Respondents	Frequency/Percentage
Male	160 (72.1%)
Female	112(27.9%)
Total	272 (100%)
Marital Status	Frequency/Percentage
Married	150 (67.6)
Single	50 (22.5)
Others	72 (9.9)
Total	272 (100%)
Age of Respondents	Frequency/Percentage
18-23	34 (10.8%)
24-28	55 (15.7%)
29-34	68 (30.6%)
35-39	59 (22.1%)
40 and Above	56 (20.7%)
Total	272 (100%)
Educational Qualification	Frequency/Percentage
Secondary (SSCE)	92 (36.9%)
Diploma/NCE	60 (18.1%)
B.Sc. Degree/HND	86 (34.2%)
M.Sc.	34 (10.8%)
Total	272 (100%)
Department of respondents	Frequency/Percentage
Administration	50 (18.0%)
Education	41 (18.5%)
Agriculture	34 (6.3%)

Works	50 (22.5%)
Finance	22 (5.4%)
Audit	21 (9.5%)
Environmental	25 (11.3%)
Health	29 (8.6%)
Total	272 (100%)
Years in Service	Frequency/Percentage
1-5 years	44 (19.8%)
6-10 years	65 (15.7)
11-15 years	126 (56.7%)
16 years and above	37 (7.6%)
Total	272 (100%)

The demographic profile (Table 1) of respondents shows that the workforce in AMAC is male-dominated, with 160 males (72.1%) and 112 females (27.9%). This reflects a gender imbalance that is common in many public sector institutions in Nigeria and other developing contexts (Baba Ibrahim, 2023; Offem, 2021). Studies have shown that leadership styles in male-dominated organizations often lean towards directive or transactional approaches, which may influence how motivation strategies are perceived by employees (Karakiliç, 2019; Yılmaz *et al.*, 2019) terms of marital status, 67.6% of respondents are married, indicating a workforce with family responsibilities. Research suggests that married employees often place higher value on job security, fairness, and supportive leadership, which strongly affects their motivation and organizational commitment (Kumar *et al.*, 2025; Nwachukwu, 2025) Age distribution shows that the majority of respondents fall between 29–34 years (30.6%) and 35–39 years (22.1%), meaning most staff are in their economically active and career-building years. According to Wang & Xue, (2022) and Zhenjing *et al.*, (2022), employees in this age bracket are highly responsive to leadership styles that offer growth opportunities, recognition, and participation in decision-making. Educational qualification indicates that 36.9% hold SSCE, 18.1% have NCE/Diploma, 34.2% possess B.Sc./HND, and 10.8% have M.Sc. degrees. This mix suggests a moderately educated workforce, which implies that leadership approaches must be flexible and inclusive to address both skilled and semi-skilled employees (Clarke, 2025; Iqbal *et al.*, 2024). Departmental distribution shows wide representation across AMAC’s eight departments, with Works (22.5%), Administration (18.0%), and Education (18.5%) being the most represented. This confirms that the sample fairly captures the operational structure of AMAC, strengthening the generalizability of the findings (Abidemi & Omosefe, 2019; Mawoli *et al.*, 2020). Years in service reveal that 56.7% of respondents have worked between 11–15 years, showing a stable and experienced workforce. Long-serving employees often expect leadership that recognizes experience and offers participatory roles in governance and administration (Aghahowa, 2021; Mukwawaya, 2025).

Table 2 Respondents’ Views on Leadership Style Exhibited in AMAC

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Transactional Leadership	41	13.9
Delegation(Laissez-Faire) Leadership	100	40.5

Traditional Leadership Styles	33	10.5
Autocratic Leadership	30	4.5
Participative(Democratic) Leadership	68	26.1
Total	272	100

Table 2 presents respondents’ perceptions of the leadership styles predominantly exhibited in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The results indicate that Delegation (Laissez-Faire) Leadership is the most commonly perceived style, with 100 respondents (40.5%), followed by Participative (Democratic) Leadership with 68 respondents (26.1%). Transactional leadership accounts for 41 respondents (13.9%), Traditional leadership styles represent 33 respondents (10.5%), while Autocratic leadership is the least practiced with only 30 respondents (4.5%). The dominance of delegation (laissez-faire) leadership suggests that many leaders in AMAC allow employees considerable autonomy in performing their duties. This aligns with findings by Liden *et al.*, (2025) and Gazi *et al.*, (2024), who argue that when employees are trusted with responsibility, it can enhance intrinsic motivation and innovation. However, excessive delegation without guidance may also lead to role ambiguity and reduced accountability, especially in public sector settings (John, 2005; Karakiliç, 2019; Yılmaz *et al.*, 2019). The relatively high presence of participative (democratic) leadership (26.1%) indicates that a substantial number of leaders involve employees in decision-making. This supports the views of Iqbal *et al.*, (2024), Clarke, (2025), and Helalat *et al.*, (2025), who emphasize that participative leadership fosters psychological ownership, commitment, and motivation. In African and Nigerian public institutions, participative leadership has been linked to higher morale and organizational citizenship behavior (Abegunde & Taiye Joshua, 2020; Aghahowa, 2021; Mukwawaya, 2025) . Transactional leadership (13.9%) reflects the use of rewards and sanctions to regulate performance. While this style can promote compliance and short-term efficiency, studies suggest it is less effective for sustaining long-term motivation compared to transformational and participative approaches (Al-Harathi, 2025; Kasim, 2016; Uli *et al.*, 2020). Traditional leadership styles (10.5%), which emphasize hierarchy and authority, still exist in AMAC but are not dominant. This mirrors findings by Offem, (2021) and Mawoli *et al.*, (2020) that Nigerian local governments are gradually shifting from rigid bureaucratic leadership toward more flexible and inclusive styles. Autocratic leadership being the least reported (4.5%) is encouraging, as authoritarian approaches are often associated with low morale, stress, and resistance to change (Baba Ibrahim, 2023; Karakiliç, 2019; Yılmaz *et al.*, 2019). Its limited presence suggests that AMAC leaders may be increasingly aware of the negative impact of coercive control on employee motivation. Overall, the pattern in Table 2 indicates a leadership climate in AMAC that is leaning toward delegation and participation, which is consistent with global and Nigerian evidence that employee-centered leadership styles are more effective in motivating workers and enhancing public sector performance (Gazi *et al.*, 2024; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024; Serunjogi *et al.*, 2025; Taiwo, 2010).

Table 3: Factors Affecting Leadership and Employee Motivation in AMAC

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Workers exclusion	41	14.0
Religious	40	13.5
Ethnic sentiment	40	13.5
Lack of responsibility	31	9.5
Corruption	120	49.5
Total	272	100

Table 3 presents respondents’ views on major factors affecting leadership effectiveness and employee motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The findings show that corruption is the most significant challenge, with 120 respondents (49.5%) identifying it as a major problem. This result is consistent with studies in Nigerian and African public institutions which argue that corruption undermines trust, fairness, and morale among workers (Baba Ibrahim, 2023; Mawoli *et al.*, 2020; Offem, 2021). When employees perceive leadership as corrupt or biased, their motivation, commitment, and willingness to go beyond minimum job requirements are severely weakened (Nwachukwu, 2025; Serunjogi *et al.*, 2025). The second major factor is workers’ exclusion, reported by 41 respondents (14.0%). This suggests that many employees feel marginalized from decision-making processes. According to Iqbal *et al.*, (2024), Clarke, (2025), and Helalat *et al.*, (2025), exclusion from participation reduces psychological ownership and leads to low engagement and job dissatisfaction. In the African public sector context, participative leadership has been shown to enhance morale and performance, while exclusion fosters apathy and resistance (Abegunde & Taiye Joshua, 2020; Aghahowa, 2021; Mukwawaya, 2025). Religious and ethnic sentiment, identified by 40 respondents (13.5%), reflects the influence of identity-based favoritism in leadership decisions. This finding supports earlier Nigerian studies that argue that ethnic and religious bias in appointments, promotions, and task allocation negatively affects equity and employee motivation (Abidemi & Omosefe, 2019; Offem, 2021). Such sentiments weaken teamwork and reduce trust in leadership (Mawoli *et al.*, 2020; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024). Lack of responsibility, with 31 respondents (9.5%), indicates poor accountability and weak supervisory practices among leaders. When leaders fail to take responsibility for outcomes, employees often mirror such behavior, leading to inefficiency and low morale (Al-Harhi, 2025; Kasim, 2016; Uli *et al.*, 2020). Overall, the table reveals that corruption, exclusion, and sentiment-based favoritism are major barriers to effective leadership and employee motivation in AMAC. These findings align with the literature which emphasizes that ethical, transparent, and participative leadership is essential for sustaining motivation and improving public sector performance (Gazi *et al.*, 2024; Liden *et al.*, 2025; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024; Serunjogi *et al.*, 2025; Taiwo, 2010).

Table 4 Responses on Issues Susceptible to Workers De-motivation in AMAC

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
Slow career progression	37	12.1
None payment of arrears	101	45.1
Public dissatisfaction	43	10.4
Strict rules	40	13.5
Lack of feedback	51	18.4
Total	272	100

The majority of respondents (45.1%) identified non-payment of arrears as the most significant factor affecting their motivation. This suggests that financial dissatisfaction remains the dominant demotivating factor among AMAC employees. This finding aligns with classical motivation theories such as those discussed by Famighetti, (1981), which emphasize the importance of financial security in sustaining employee morale. Empirical studies by Taiwo, (2010); Obiekwe *et al.*, (2018); Abidemi & Omosefe, (2019); and Mawoli *et al.*, (2020) similarly confirm that delayed salaries and unpaid benefits significantly reduce job satisfaction and performance in public sector institutions. On the other hand, contemporary research Iqbal *et al.*, (2024); Gazi *et al.*, (2024); Hassan *et al.*, (2025); and Sastrawan & Rahmawati, (2025) further supports that transformational and ethical leadership styles can mitigate financial dissatisfaction through transparent communication and supportive policies. The high percentage here suggests possible weaknesses in leadership accountability and financial management within AMAC. A considerable proportion (18.4%) cited lack of feedback as a demotivating factor. Leadership communication is central to employee engagement. According to Al-Eraky *et*

al., (2016); Yılmaz *et al.*, (2019); and Uka & Prendi, (2021), constructive feedback enhances employee confidence, clarity of roles, and organizational commitment. Recent studies by Liden *et al.*, (2025); Clarke, (2025); and Helalat *et al.*, (2025) highlight that servant and transformational leadership styles significantly improve motivation through regular feedback and participatory decision-making. The finding implies that leadership practices in AMAC may be overly bureaucratic or transactional, limiting open communication channels. About 13.5% of respondents indicated strict rules as a motivational challenge. While rules are necessary in public administration, excessively rigid leadership may suppress creativity and autonomy. Research by Karakiliç, (2019); Sugiharjo *et al.*, (2022); and Janovac *et al.*, (2023) shows that authoritarian leadership styles often reduce intrinsic motivation. Conversely, participative leadership approaches, as emphasized by Permzadian & Shen, (2024) and Hirawat, (2024), enhance employee empowerment and work satisfaction. This suggests that AMAC leadership may need to balance discipline with flexibility to foster a more motivating work environment. Approximately 12.1% reported slow career progression as a demotivating factor. Career advancement is a critical driver of long-term motivation. According to works of Kasim, (2016); Novitasari *et al.*, (2015); Rony, (2024); and Wang & Xue, (2022) indicate that clear promotion pathways and professional development opportunities significantly improve employee commitment. Furthermore, Maryadi *et al.*, (2026); Moldabekov *et al.*, (2025); and Agustina *et al.*, (2025) emphasize leadership's role in mentoring and talent development. The moderate percentage suggests dissatisfaction with promotional structures within AMAC, possibly linked to bureaucratic bottlenecks or limited performance-based advancement systems. The least cited factor (10.4%) was public dissatisfaction. While this has the lowest percentage, it still reflects concern over external pressures affecting morale. According to Aghahowa, (2021); Owotemu *et al.*, (2024); and Biloa, (2023), public sector employees often experience stress due to community expectations and criticism. Although not the most critical issue, the presence of this factor suggests that leadership in AMAC must strengthen internal morale to better manage external public scrutiny.

The study examined the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria. Using a mixed methods research design, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews from staff across eight departments in AMAC Secretariat.

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. **Dominant Leadership Styles:** The study found that delegation (*laissez-faire*) and participative (democratic) leadership styles are the most commonly practiced in AMAC, while autocratic leadership is least practiced.
2. **Level of Employee Motivation:** Employee motivation in AMAC was found to be moderate and uneven across departments, with higher motivation where leaders are supportive and inclusive.
3. **Leadership–Motivation Relationship:** There is a significant positive relationship between leadership style and employee motivation in AMAC.
4. **Predictive Power of Leadership Style:** Leadership style significantly predicts employee motivation, with participative and transformational elements having the strongest influence.
5. **Challenges to Motivation:** Corruption, workers' exclusion, ethnic and religious sentiment, and lack of accountability were identified as major factors undermining leadership effectiveness and employee motivation.
6. **Financial issues (non-payment of arrears)** are the most pressing motivational challenge, followed by communication gaps (lack of feedback) and organizational rigidity (strict rules).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that leadership style is a critical determinant of employee motivation in Abuja Municipal Area Council. Leadership approaches that emphasize participation, transparency, fairness, and delegation of responsibility tend to enhance motivation, commitment, and performance. Conversely, leadership practices characterized by exclusion, corruption, and bias weaken morale

and reduce organizational effectiveness. Therefore, for AMAC to improve service delivery and institutional performance, leadership must shift from traditional bureaucratic control toward ethical, participative, and employee-centered leadership styles. In conclusion, improving leadership style toward a more transformational, ethical, and participatory approach could significantly enhance employee motivation in AMAC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. **Adoption of Participative Leadership:** AMAC management should encourage participative leadership by involving employees in decision-making processes.
2. **Leadership Training and Development:** Regular leadership development programs should be organized to strengthen ethical, transformational, and servant leadership competencies.
3. **Anti-Corruption Measures:** Transparent systems of accountability should be enforced to reduce corruption and favoritism.
4. **Employee Inclusion:** Staff should be included in policy formulation and departmental planning to foster ownership and commitment.
5. **Recognition and Reward Systems:** AMAC should introduce clear reward and recognition mechanisms to motivate high-performing employees.
6. **Performance Feedback:** Leaders should provide regular feedback and support to staff to sustain motivation.
7. **Leadership in public institutions should:**
 - Ensure timely financial obligations
 - Promote open communication and feedback systems
 - Provide clear career progression pathways
 - Balance institutional rules with employee empowerment.

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