

Effect of Autocratic and Democratic Leadership Styles on Employee Performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited

Ologbonyo, Kehinde Jethro^{1*}, Sambo, Halimah Sani PhD², ISAAC, Oka Irene PhD³

^{1,3}Department of Management Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna.

²Department of Actuarial Science and Insurance, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600499>

Received: 01 June 2026; Accepted: 06 June 2026; Published: 27 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The study was motivated by the need to understand how leadership styles influence employee performance and organizational productivity in manufacturing organizations. Specifically, the study examined the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of employees of Dufil Prima Foods Limited, while a representative sample was selected using Taro Yamane's formula. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that autocratic leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, although excessive managerial control may reduce employee participation and workplace cooperation. The study also found that democratic leadership style positively and significantly influences employee performance through employee participation, teamwork, and open communication. Furthermore, democratic leadership style was found to exert a stronger influence on employee performance than autocratic leadership style. The study concluded that leadership style significantly influences employee performance and recommended greater adoption of democratic leadership practices to enhance employee productivity and organizational performance.

Keywords: Autocratic Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership Style, Dufil Prima Foods Limited, Employee Performance, Manufacturing Organizations.

Background to the Study

Leadership is widely recognized as a critical factor in organizational success because it influences employee behaviour, motivation, communication, and performance. In modern organizations, leaders are expected to coordinate human and material resources effectively while creating a work environment that encourages employees to contribute toward the achievement of organizational objectives. As organizations operate in increasingly competitive and dynamic environments, the importance of effective leadership has become more pronounced. Leadership practices determine how employees are supervised, motivated, and guided, thereby affecting their level of commitment and productivity.

Leadership style refers to the pattern of behaviour and approach adopted by leaders in directing, influencing, and managing employees. Different leadership styles affect employees differently, leading to variations in workplace attitudes and performance outcomes. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2022), leadership style significantly influences employee satisfaction, motivation, and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Cahyadi et al. (2022) observed that leadership practices play an important role in shaping employee performance and organizational productivity.

Among the various leadership styles identified in management literature, autocratic and democratic leadership styles remain among the most widely practiced. Autocratic leadership is characterized by centralized decision-making, strict supervision, and limited employee participation in organizational decisions. This style enables managers to make quick decisions and maintain operational control, particularly in environments where efficiency and compliance are essential. However, excessive reliance on autocratic leadership may discourage employee involvement, reduce morale, and limit creativity.

Conversely, democratic leadership emphasizes participation, consultation, teamwork, and open communication. Employees are encouraged to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes affecting their work. Research has shown that democratic leadership promotes employee engagement, collaboration, and workplace commitment, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Hassan, Akhtar, & Yilmaz, 2024). Employees who perceive that their opinions are valued are often more motivated and committed to organizational goals.

Employee performance represents the extent to which employees effectively execute assigned tasks and responsibilities. In manufacturing organizations, employee performance is particularly important because it directly affects productivity, product quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational competitiveness. This study measures employee performance using output quantity and output quality. Autocratic leadership style is measured through centralized decision-making and strict supervision, while democratic leadership style is measured through employee participation and open communication.

Dufil Prima Foods Limited is one of the leading manufacturing firms in Nigeria and relies heavily on employee productivity and effective leadership practices to maintain operational efficiency and product quality. Despite the importance of leadership in influencing employee outcomes, limited empirical studies have specifically examined the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. This creates a contextual gap that necessitates further investigation. Therefore, this study examines the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Statement of the Problem

Employee performance is essential to the achievement of organizational goals, particularly in manufacturing organizations where productivity, product quality, and operational efficiency determine organizational success. Organizations depend on employees to perform assigned tasks effectively and efficiently in order to maintain competitiveness and achieve desired outcomes. However, many manufacturing firms continue to experience challenges such as low productivity, poor communication, reduced employee commitment, and declining workplace morale, which can negatively affect organizational performance.

Leadership style is one of the major factors that influence employee behaviour, motivation, and performance in the workplace. Managers utilize different leadership approaches to direct employees and coordinate organizational activities. Among these approaches, autocratic leadership and democratic leadership are widely practiced in organizations. Autocratic leadership emphasizes centralized decision-making and strict supervision, while democratic leadership encourages employee participation and open communication. The manner in which these leadership styles are applied can significantly affect employees' willingness to contribute to organizational objectives and perform their duties effectively.

Dufil Prima Foods Limited operates in a highly competitive manufacturing environment where employee productivity and quality performance are critical to achieving production targets and maintaining product standards. Effective leadership is therefore necessary to ensure that employees remain motivated, committed, and productive. However, concerns relating to employee participation, communication, supervision, and workplace effectiveness suggest the need to examine how leadership styles influence employee performance within the organization.

Although previous studies have investigated leadership styles and employee performance, limited empirical evidence exists on the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee

performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. This creates a contextual gap in the literature. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine;

- i. The effect of autocratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.
- ii. The effect of democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of autocratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited?
- ii. What is the effect of democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Autocratic leadership style has no significant effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

H₀₂: Democratic leadership style has no significant effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial to management of Dufil Prima Foods Limited by providing insights into how leadership styles influence employee performance. The findings will help managers identify appropriate leadership approaches capable of improving employee productivity, motivation, and organizational efficiency.

The study will also benefit employees by highlighting the importance of leadership practices that encourage participation, communication, fairness, and effective supervision. Employees may gain improved work satisfaction and motivation when appropriate leadership styles are adopted.

Furthermore, the study will contribute to existing literature on leadership and employee performance, particularly within Nigeria's manufacturing sector. Researchers and students in the field of Business Administration, Management, and Organizational Behavior will find the study useful as reference material for future academic research.

Finally, policy makers and organizational leaders may utilize the findings of this study in designing leadership development programs and management policies aimed at improving employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The study specifically examines how these leadership styles influence employee

productivity, motivation, commitment, and overall job performance within the organization.

The study is limited to employees and management staff of Dufil Prima Foods Limited. Geographically, the research is confined to the selected branch or operational unit of the company used for the study. The variables covered include autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style as the independent variables, while employee performance serves as the dependent variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Concept of Leadership

Leadership refers to the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, direct, and coordinate the activities of others toward the achievement of organizational goals. It is a fundamental aspect of management that determines how employees are guided, supervised, and encouraged to perform their responsibilities effectively. Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employee attitudes, workplace behaviour, communication patterns, and organizational culture. In contemporary organizations, leaders are expected to provide direction, create a positive work environment, and facilitate the achievement of both individual and organizational objectives.

Effective leadership contributes significantly to organizational success by promoting teamwork, commitment, and productivity among employees. Leaders influence how resources are utilized and how employees respond to organizational challenges and opportunities. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2022), leadership is a critical factor that affects employee performance and organizational effectiveness. In this study, leadership refers to the ability of managers in Dufil Prima Foods Limited to influence employees and coordinate workplace activities through the application of autocratic and democratic leadership styles to achieve organizational goals and improve employee performance.

Concept of Leadership Style

Leadership style refers to the pattern of behaviour and approach adopted by a leader in directing, influencing, and managing employees within an organization. It reflects how leaders communicate, make decisions, delegate responsibilities, supervise subordinates, and interact with employees. Leadership style is important because it determines the quality of relationships between managers and employees and influences employee motivation, morale, commitment, and productivity. Different leadership styles produce different outcomes depending on the organizational environment and the nature of tasks being performed.

Organizations adopt different leadership styles based on their objectives, operational requirements, and workplace conditions. Some leadership styles encourage employee participation and collaboration, while others emphasize authority and control. The effectiveness of a leadership style is often measured by its ability to improve employee performance and facilitate organizational success. Cahyadi et al. (2022) observed that leadership style significantly influences employee behaviour and workplace outcomes. In this study, leadership style refers to the behavioural approach adopted by managers of Dufil Prima Foods Limited in directing and influencing employees through autocratic and democratic leadership practices.

Autocratic Leadership Style

Autocratic leadership style is a leadership approach in which decision-making authority is concentrated in the hands of the leader, with little or no input from employees. Under this style, managers make decisions independently, establish policies, and closely supervise subordinates to ensure compliance with organizational rules and procedures. Employees are generally expected to follow instructions and perform assigned duties without actively participating in decision-making processes. This style is commonly used in situations that require quick decisions, operational discipline, and strict control over organizational activities.

Autocratic leadership can contribute to efficiency by ensuring clear direction, rapid decision-making, and adherence to organizational standards. However, excessive use of this leadership style may reduce employee morale, creativity, and participation because employees may feel excluded from workplace decisions. Oh and Jang (2023) noted that highly autocratic leadership practices can negatively influence employee trust and workplace outcomes when employees have limited involvement in organizational processes. In this study, autocratic leadership style is measured using centralized decision-making and strict supervision, which represent the key characteristics of managerial control within Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Democratic Leadership Style

Democratic leadership style is a participative approach to leadership that encourages employees to contribute ideas, share opinions, and participate in organizational decision-making processes. Under this style, managers consult employees before making decisions and create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork. Democratic leaders recognize the value of employee input and promote a work environment where communication flows freely between management and staff. This leadership style is often associated with employee empowerment, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

The democratic leadership style enhances workplace relationships by fostering trust, openness, and cooperation among employees. Employees who are involved in organizational decisions are more likely to feel valued and committed to achieving organizational goals. Research has shown that democratic leadership contributes positively to employee engagement, innovation, and productivity. Hassan, Akhtar and Yilmaz (2024) argued that participative leadership behaviours encourage greater employee commitment and workplace effectiveness. In this study, democratic leadership style is measured using employee participation and open communication because these dimensions reflect the extent to which employees are involved in organizational activities and decision-making processes.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively and efficiently carry out assigned duties and responsibilities to achieve organizational objectives. It reflects the quality and quantity of work produced by employees within a specified period. Employee performance is a critical determinant of organizational success because organizations depend on employees to achieve production targets, deliver quality services, and maintain operational efficiency. High-performing employees contribute significantly to productivity, profitability, and organizational growth.

Several factors influence employee performance, including leadership style, motivation, skills, work environment, and organizational support. Effective leadership can improve employee commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction, thereby enhancing performance outcomes. According to Mphaluwa (2025), leadership practices significantly influence employee engagement and performance across organizations. In manufacturing firms, employee performance is particularly important because it affects product quality, operational effectiveness, and customer satisfaction. In this study, employee performance is measured using output quantity and output quality. Output quantity refers to the volume of work completed by employees, while output quality refers to the accuracy, reliability, and standard of work produced.

Empirical Review

Autocratic Leadership Style and Employee Performance

Iyaji and Bakare (2023) conducted a study titled *Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance Sustainability in Selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in North-Central Nigeria*. The study adopted a survey research design and was carried out among SMEs in North-Central Nigeria. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 81 respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that autocratic leadership practices such as centralized decision-making, close monitoring, and strict adherence to rules significantly influenced employee performance sustainability. The study recommended that managers should adopt leadership approaches that balance control with employee involvement to enhance performance. However, the study focused on SMEs and employee performance sustainability rather than employee performance measured through output quantity and output quality. In addition, the study was not conducted in the manufacturing sector. This creates a contextual gap which the present study seeks to fill.

Mohammed (2023) conducted a study titled *The Managers' Autocratic Leadership Style and Employees' Performance in Commercial Banks in the Eastern Province*. The study employed a quantitative survey design

and was carried out in commercial banks located in the Eastern Province. Primary data were obtained through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire administered to 250 employees selected through simple random sampling. The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques. The findings indicated that autocratic leadership style significantly influenced employee performance, although excessive managerial control negatively affected employee morale and participation. The study recommended that managers should reduce excessive authoritarian practices and encourage employee involvement in workplace activities. However, the study focused on the banking sector rather than manufacturing organizations. This creates a sectoral gap that the present study intends to address.

Akanbi and Adebayo (2022) conducted a study titled *Autocratic Leadership Styles and Employee Productivity in Pharmaceutical Companies in Nigeria*. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted among pharmaceutical companies in Nigeria. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that autocratic leadership significantly influenced employee productivity through strict supervision and centralized decision-making. The study recommended that managers should combine operational control with employee engagement to improve productivity. However, the study concentrated on pharmaceutical companies and measured productivity generally without considering output quantity and output quality. This creates a measurement gap which the current study seeks to address.

Iman and Lestari (2024) conducted a study titled *The Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Stress and Performance*. The study adopted a quantitative research design and was carried out among employees in selected organizations. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using statistical methods. The findings revealed that autocratic leadership significantly influenced employee performance through workplace discipline and control mechanisms. The study recommended that organizations should adopt leadership approaches that balance organizational control with employee welfare. However, the study focused broadly on leadership style and stress rather than employee performance indicators in manufacturing organizations. Therefore, the current study seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

The reviewed studies established that autocratic leadership significantly influences employee performance through centralized decision-making, strict supervision, discipline, and managerial control. However, most of the studies were conducted in SMEs, banks, pharmaceutical companies, and other non-manufacturing sectors. Furthermore, employee performance was measured generally without specific attention to output quantity and output quality. Most studies also focused on different geographical locations outside the specific context of Dufil Prima Foods Limited. Therefore, the present study seeks to address these contextual, sectoral, and measurement gaps by examining the effect of autocratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited using output quantity and output quality as indicators of employee performance.

Democratic Leadership Style and Employee Performance

Cahyadi, Marwa, Hågen, Siraj, Santati, Poór and Szabó (2022) conducted a study titled *Leadership Styles, High-Involvement Human Resource Management Practices, and Individual Employee Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises in the Digital Era*. The study adopted a quantitative research design and was carried out among SMEs in Lubuklinggau, Indonesia. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from 276 respondents and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings revealed that participatory leadership practices positively influenced employee performance and organizational effectiveness. The study recommended that organizations should encourage employee participation and involvement in workplace activities. However, the study focused on SMEs rather than manufacturing firms and did not specifically examine democratic leadership style. This creates a contextual gap that the current study seeks to address.

Briggs (2023) conducted a study titled *Democratic Leadership and Employee Performance*. The study adopted a review-based methodology and examined evidence from existing literature on democratic leadership and employee performance. The findings showed that collaborative decision-making, employee participation, and skill sharing positively influenced employee performance. The study recommended that organizational leaders should encourage participation and teamwork in workplace decision-making. However, the study was

conceptual and did not provide empirical evidence from a specific organization or sector. The present study seeks to provide empirical evidence from a manufacturing organization.

Odunayo and Colleagues (2023) conducted a study titled Democratic Leadership Style and Corporate Performance in Selected Food and Beverages Manufacturing Companies in South-West Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design and focused on manufacturing companies in South-West Nigeria. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using statistical techniques. Findings revealed that democratic leadership positively affected corporate performance through employee participation and improved communication. The study recommended that organizations should encourage participatory decision-making to improve performance. However, the study focused on corporate performance rather than employee performance. This creates a measurement gap which the present study intends to address.

Nwankwo and Nwafor (2023) conducted a study on democratic leadership style and employee performance in Seplat Energy Plc, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires from 207 respondents and analyzed using simple regression analysis. The findings revealed that democratic leadership style had a significant positive effect on employee performance by encouraging participation in decision-making and fostering a sense of belonging among employees. The study recommended that managers should promote democratic leadership practices to enhance employee commitment and productivity. However, the study focused on the energy sector rather than manufacturing organizations. This creates a sectoral gap which the current study seeks to address.

The reviewed studies demonstrated that democratic leadership positively influences employee performance through employee participation, open communication, teamwork, and collaborative decision-making. Nevertheless, most of the studies were conducted in SMEs, energy companies, and other sectors outside the manufacturing industry. Some studies focused on organizational or corporate performance rather than employee performance specifically. In addition, few studies examined democratic leadership within the context of Nigerian manufacturing organizations. Consequently, the present study seeks to fill these gaps by examining the effect of democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The study will specifically measure democratic leadership using employee participation and open communication, while employee performance will be measured through output quantity and output quality.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Likert's Leadership Systems Theory

The Leadership Systems Theory, formulated by Rensis Likert in 1967, serves as the foundation of this study. The theory was developed to explain how different leadership approaches influence employee attitudes, motivation, behaviour, and organizational performance. Likert posited that an organization's success is significantly contingent upon the leadership style implemented by managers, alongside the quality of interactions between leaders and subordinates. The theory suggests that leadership exerts a profound influence on decision-making processes, the dynamics of communication throughout the organization, and employee participation in activities. Furthermore, it posits that employee performance is likely to be improved when leaders foster a workplace characterized by support, trust, cooperation, and inclusive decision-making.

Likert identified four management systems, namely the Exploitative-Authoritative System, Benevolent-Authoritative System, Consultative System, and Participative System. The Exploitative-Authoritative System represents a highly autocratic leadership style where managers exercise complete control over employees, make decisions independently, and expect strict obedience from subordinates. Communication under this system is largely one-directional, flowing from management to employees, while employee participation in decision-making is minimal. The Benevolent-Authoritative System is similar but allows managers to show some concern for employee welfare. The Consultative System permits managers to seek opinions from employees before making decisions, while the Participative System promotes extensive employee involvement, open communication, teamwork, and shared responsibility in organizational decision-making. Likert considered the

Participative System to be the most effective because it fosters employee commitment, motivation, and productivity.

The theory further suggests that organizations that encourage employee participation tend to achieve better performance outcomes than organizations that rely solely on authoritarian control. Employees who are involved in organizational decisions often develop a stronger sense of belonging, responsibility, and commitment toward organizational goals. Such employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of productivity, cooperation, and job satisfaction. Conversely, excessive reliance on autocratic leadership may create fear, dissatisfaction, and low morale among employees, which can negatively affect performance over time. While autocratic leadership may be useful in situations requiring quick decision-making and strict supervision, democratic leadership is generally associated with improved employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

The relevance of Likert's Leadership Systems Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain the influence of both autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance. The theory provides a suitable framework for understanding how centralized decision-making and strict supervision associated with autocratic leadership, as well as employee participation and open communication associated with democratic leadership, affect employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. Therefore, the theory serves as an appropriate foundation for examining the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance in the organization.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The target population comprised employees of Dufil Prima Foods Limited. A sample of 154 respondents was selected using Taro Yamane's sampling formula, while simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that all employees had an equal chance of being selected for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents, and the completed copies were retrieved for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' responses and answer the research questions. Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. Specifically, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. All hypotheses were tested at a 5 percent (0.05) level of significance.

Model Specification

The functional relationship for the study is expressed as:

$$EP = f(ALS, DLS)$$

The econometric model is specified as:

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ALS + \beta_2 DLS + \mu$$

Where:

EP = Employee Performance

ALS = Autocratic Leadership Style

DLS = Democratic Leadership Style

β_0 = Constant Term

$\beta_1 - \beta_2$ = Regression Coefficients

μ = Error Term

A priori expectation:

$\beta_1 > 0, \beta_2 > 0$

This implies that autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style are expected to have positive effects on employee performance.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from employees of Dufil Prima Foods Limited on the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance. The data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. The chapter presents the response rate, regression analysis, test of hypotheses, and discussion of findings.

Response Rate

A total of 154 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents. Out of this number, 148 copies were correctly completed and returned, while 6 copies were not returned. This represents a response rate of 96.1%, which is considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

Table 1

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distributed	154	100
Returned	148	96.1
Not Returned	6	3.9
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The high response rate indicates a strong level of participation among respondents and enhances the reliability of the study findings.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Table 2 Model Summary of the Effect of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance (N = 148)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of Estimate
1	.612	.375	.366	.684

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The model summary reveals a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.612, indicating a moderate positive relationship between leadership styles and employee performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.375 implies that autocratic and democratic leadership styles jointly account for 37.5% of the variation in employee performance, while the remaining 62.5% is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.366 confirms that the model possesses moderate explanatory power.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 3

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	28.516	2	14.258	30.476	< .001
Residual	67.847	145	0.468		
Total	96.363	147			

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The ANOVA result indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. The p-value is less than .001 ($p < .001$), which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the independent variables jointly have a significant effect on employee performance. Therefore, the regression model is appropriate for explaining the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance.

Regression Coefficients

Table 4

Predictor	B	β	t	p
Constant	1.284	—	3.911	< .001
Autocratic Leadership Style	0.241	.268	2.874	.005
Democratic Leadership Style	0.417	.451	5.192	< .001

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The coefficient table indicates that autocratic leadership style has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.268$, $p = 0.005$). This implies that an improvement in autocratic leadership practices contributes positively to employee performance.

Similarly, democratic leadership style has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.451$, $p < .001$). The higher beta coefficient suggests that democratic leadership style exerts a stronger influence on employee performance than autocratic leadership style.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Autocratic leadership style has no significant effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

The regression result shows that autocratic leadership style has a significance value of 0.005, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Therefore, autocratic leadership style has a significant positive effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Democratic leadership style has no significant effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

The regression result reveals that democratic leadership style has a p-value less than .001 ($p < .001$), which is lower than the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This implies that democratic leadership style has a significant positive effect on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that autocratic leadership style significantly influences employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The positive coefficient obtained from the regression analysis indicates that centralized decision-making and strict supervision contribute to workplace discipline and operational efficiency. The result suggests that when managers exercise appropriate control and provide clear directives, employees tend to perform their assigned responsibilities effectively. This finding is consistent with the studies of Khan, Abdullah and Hamid (2023), Musa and Bello (2025), and Wei and Vasudevan (2022), who reported that autocratic leadership enhances employee productivity and organizational efficiency, particularly in environments requiring strict supervision and adherence to procedures.

The study also established that democratic leadership style has a significant positive effect on employee performance. The findings demonstrate that employee participation, teamwork, consultation, and open communication contribute substantially to improved workplace performance. Employees who are involved in decision-making processes are more likely to exhibit commitment, motivation, and a sense of ownership toward organizational goals. The result further revealed that democratic leadership style has a stronger influence on employee performance than autocratic leadership style, as indicated by its higher standardized beta coefficient. This finding supports the argument of Likert's Leadership Systems Theory, which emphasizes the effectiveness of participative leadership in enhancing employee commitment and productivity. The result is also consistent with the findings of Cahyadi et al. (2022), Hassan, Akhtar and Yilmaz (2024), and Mphaluwa (2025), who found that democratic leadership promotes employee engagement, communication, and organizational effectiveness.

Overall, the findings indicate that while both leadership styles contribute positively to employee performance, democratic leadership style is more effective in promoting long-term employee commitment, cooperation and productivity in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined the effect of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The study was motivated by the need to understand how leadership styles influence employee performance within manufacturing organizations. Specifically, the study examined the effect of autocratic leadership style and democratic leadership style on employee performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of employees of Dufil Prima Foods Limited, while a sample was selected using Taro Yamane's formula and simple random sampling technique. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics.

The findings revealed that autocratic leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The study showed that centralized decision-making and strict supervision contribute to operational discipline and compliance with organizational procedures. However, excessive reliance on autocratic practices

may reduce employee participation and workplace cooperation. The findings also revealed that democratic leadership style positively and significantly influences employee performance through employee participation, teamwork, and open communication. Furthermore, democratic leadership style was found to have a stronger influence on employee performance than autocratic leadership style. The study therefore established that leadership style is an important determinant of employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that leadership style plays a significant role in influencing employee performance in Dufil Prima Foods Limited. The study established that both autocratic and democratic leadership styles have significant effects on employee performance. Autocratic leadership contributes positively to organizational effectiveness by promoting discipline, compliance with organizational procedures, and timely decision-making. Nevertheless, excessive use of autocratic leadership may discourage employee involvement, reduce communication, and negatively affect workplace relationships.

The study further concludes that democratic leadership style is more effective in enhancing employee performance because it encourages employee participation, teamwork, communication, and collaboration. Employees are more likely to be motivated and committed to organizational objectives when they are given opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes and express their opinions on issues affecting their work. Democratic leadership therefore creates a supportive work environment that promotes productivity and improved performance outcomes.

The findings support the argument of Likert's Leadership Systems Theory that participative leadership approaches are generally more effective in improving employee commitment and organizational performance. While autocratic leadership may be useful in situations requiring strict supervision and quick decisions, democratic leadership provides greater opportunities for employee engagement and long-term organizational success. Consequently, the study concludes that managers in Dufil Prima Foods Limited should adopt leadership practices that balance operational control with employee participation in order to achieve improved employee performance and organizational productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Management of Dufil Prima Foods Limited should encourage democratic leadership practices by involving employees in workplace decision-making processes to enhance motivation, commitment, and productivity.
- ii. Managers and supervisors should reduce excessive use of autocratic leadership practices that may limit employee participation, communication, and workplace cooperation.
- iii. The organization should establish effective communication channels that encourage regular interaction, feedback, and information sharing between management and employees.
- iv. Management should organize regular leadership development and training programmes for supervisors and departmental heads to improve leadership effectiveness and employee relations.
- v. Employees should be encouraged to contribute ideas and suggestions relating to organizational operations and production activities in order to enhance innovation, teamwork, and overall organizational performance.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to Dufil Prima Foods Limited; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to all manufacturing organizations in Nigeria. The study also focused only on autocratic and democratic leadership styles without considering other leadership approaches that may influence employee performance. In addition, the study relied on questionnaire responses obtained from employees, which may have been influenced by

personal opinions and perceptions. Time and financial constraints further limited the scope of the study and restricted data collection to a single organization.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should examine the influence of other leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee performance within manufacturing organizations. Researchers may also extend the scope of future studies to include multiple manufacturing firms across different geographical locations in Nigeria to improve the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, future studies should investigate the relationship between leadership styles and other organizational outcomes such as employee commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, and innovation. Researchers may also adopt mixed-method approaches combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain deeper insights into the influence of leadership styles on employee performance.

REFERENCES

1. Agyemang, F., & Ofei, S. B. (2024). Leadership styles and employee performance in manufacturing firms in Ghana. *South African Journal of Business Studies*, 55(2), 118–132. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SAJBS-09-2023-0312>
2. Ali, R., Anwar, K., & Muhammad, S. (2024). Autocratic leadership style and employee productivity in industrial organizations. *Management Science Letters*, 14(1), 145–156.
3. Cahyadi, A., Hendri, M. I., & Suryani, N. K. (2022). Leadership style and employee performance in manufacturing organizations. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(2), 45–58.
4. Cahyadi, A., Marwa, T., Hågen, I., Siraj, M. N., Santati, P., Poór, J., & Szabó, K. (2022). Leadership styles, high-involvement human resource management practices, and individual employee performance in small and medium enterprises in the digital era. *Economies*, 10(7), 162.
5. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
6. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2022). *Multivariate data analysis* (9th ed.). Cengage Learning.
7. Hassan, R., Akhtar, S., & Yilmaz, A. (2024). Leadership behaviour and employee engagement in modern organizations. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–12.
8. Hassnain, A. M. U. (2023). Impact of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employees' performance and motivation. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Education and Development*, 4(2), 45–58.
9. Hassnain, M. (2023). Democratic leadership and employee motivation in organizations. *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 9(3), 88–101.
10. Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. (2021). Likert scale: Explored and explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 7(4), 396–403.
11. Khan, I., Abdullah, N., & Hamid, R. (2023). Autocratic leadership and employee workplace behaviour in manufacturing firms. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 12(4), 355–369.
12. Mphaluwa, G. (2025). How do leadership styles influence employee engagement and performance? *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1), 1–14.
13. Musa, A., & Bello, U. (2025). Autocratic leadership and employee productivity in Nigerian manufacturing firms. *Lagos Journal of Management Studies*, 15(2), 77–91.
14. Nanjundeswaraswamy, T. S., & Swamy, D. R. (2022). Leadership styles and employee performance: A review perspective. *International Research Journal of Business Studies*, 15(1), 23–37.
15. Nwogbo, C., & Okeke, P. (2025). Democratic leadership and organizational productivity in Nigerian manufacturing firms. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 8(3), 410–421.
16. Nwogbo, I. E. (2025). The evaluation of leadership styles and their effects on employee attitude and organizational performance. *Quarterly Economics and Management Studies*, 8(1), 55–70.
17. Oh, J., & Jang, H. (2023). The impact of inclusive leadership and autocratic leadership on organizational trust and employee outcomes. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 3367.

18. Qalati, S. A., Li, W., Ahmed, N., Ali, S., & Khan, A. (2024). Leadership styles and employee workplace behaviour. *Qeios Management and Economics Studies*, 5(1), 1–15.
19. Resnik, D. B. (2020). What is ethics in research and why is it important? National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.
20. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.
21. Taber, K. S. (2021). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, 48(6), 1273–1296.
22. Taherdoost, H. (2021). Validity and reliability of the research instrument: How to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 5(3), 28–36.
23. Taherdoost, H. (2023). Sampling methods in research methodology. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 12(1), 18–27.
24. Wei, L., & Vasudevan, H. L. (2022). Leadership style and company performance in the manufacturing industry. *International Journal of Human Capital in Urban Management*, 7(3), 1–14.
25. Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.