

Development of an Afrocentric Effective Leadership (AEL) Instrument for Zimbabwean SMEs.

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to a country's economy. However, the challenge is that there is a high failure rate among SMEs which can be attributed to lack of effective leadership. This paper seeks to present and validate an Afrocentric Effective Leadership (AEL) instrument to measure effective leadership in Zimbabwean SMEs. A survey was conducted with quantitative data collected from 241 respondents from Bulawayo's Central Business Area (CBA) chosen through proportional stratified sampling. The AEL instrument was validated using exploratory factor analysis. A total of ten factors resulted, namely, leadership style, effectiveness of the situational leadership theory, leader characteristics, follower characteristics, culture, ubuntu, traditional leadership, history of the country, stage of economic development of the country and effective leadership. The perception of the existence of effective leadership in African SMEs so that early interventions are implemented to avoid high failure rates.

Key words: Afrocentric; Effective leadership; Leadership; Instrument; SMEs

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1.0 Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to any country's economy because they act as a catalyst for industrialisation (Muriithi, 2017). This is the reason why most African governments have started to regard them as the solution to a myriad of economic problems on the continent (Tinarwo, 2016). SMEs have great potential to benefit Zimbabwe in terms of employment creation (Mugozhi and Hlabiso, 2017; Maseko and Manyani, 2011; Chinembiri, 2011) and the birth of large organisations (Chipangura and Kaseke, 2012) among other notable benefits.

According to FinScope (2012) 2.8 million people in Zimbabwe participate in SMEs as owners while a further 2.9 million participate as employees. Most SMEs in the country have been established for subsistence purposes (Karedza, Sikwila, Mpofu and Makurumidze, 2014). Rather than being opportunity based, most Zimbabwean SMEs are survivalist in nature (FinScope, 2012). The adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and its resulting deregulation can be credited with laying the fertile ground for the emergence of SMEs (Chivasa, 2014; Zindiye, Chilya and Masocha, 2012; Chipangura and Kaseke, 2012).

Although SMEs offer a great potential for the country, the challenge is that there exists a high failure rate among the SMEs (Mudavanhu, Bindu, Chigusiwa and Muchabaiwa, 2011) which can be attributed to ineffective leadership (Lekhanya, 2015; Chipangura and Kaseke, 2012). Currently, there is no data collection instrument that has been developed specifically to measure whether Zimbabwean SMEs are effectively led or not. As such, there is need to equip scholars, managers and policy makers with a reliable instrument which can be used to measure the existence of effective leadership in Zimbabwean SMEs so that appropriate interventions are implemented early to avoid the high failure rate. As such the study sought to develop and validate an instrument to measure effective leadership in Zimbabwean SMEs.

2.0 Literature on Leadership

Even though leadership is one of the most important topics in the human sciences, it is among the least understood (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). Leadership has been defined by Northouse (2004, p. 3) as “a process whereby an individual influences a

group of individuals to achieve a common goal". For leadership to be effective, it requires the leader, followers, process, and goal.

Effective leadership should be a two-way process between the leader and followers, with followers believing in the vision of the leader and being inspired to accept and work towards mutual goals (Mwangi, 2014; Youssef, 2013; Uchendu et al., 2010; Killian, 2007). Successful leaders should be sensitive towards their followers (Mwenje, 2015). They should listen to their followers so that they understand their needs. Effective leaders are caring and supportive (Masango, 2002). They develop a cohesive team through nurturing followers and allowing them to participate in leadership activities (Mwenje, 2015).

Effective leadership demands active followers who are prepared to hold their leaders accountable (Poncian and Mgaya, 2015). Followers should be enlightened, educated and confident to have the capacity to keep their leaders in check (Uchendu et al., 2010). Failure to challenge the decisions of leaders may have a negative effect on the ability of followers to demand accountability from their leaders. When employees work in an organisation with effective leadership they will be satisfied (Dalluay and Jalagat, 2016; Albloshi and Nawar, 2015). They will feel enthusiastic and connected to organisational activities (Gabriela and Dorinela, 2017).

3.0 Methodology

The study was quantitative, guided by the positivist research philosophy with a deductive approach. The philosophy was chosen because it emphasises on objectivity (Saunders et al., 2016) while the approach enabled facts to be measured quantitatively. The study employed a survey strategy because it is common in management research (Neuman, 2014) and allows for the collection of quantitative data which can be analysed statistically. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data.

3.1 Population and sampling

All non-managerial employees, supervisory employees, managerial employees, and owner-managers of SMEs in Bulawayo's Central Business Area (CBA) constituted the population of the study. These groups were selected because of their participation in SMEs one way or the other.

Proportional stratified sampling was used because the researcher had knowledge pertaining to the population under study (Jawale, 2012) and the technique enhanced the representativeness of the sample (Saunders et al., 2016). The sample size was derived by multiplying the 5-point Likert scale by the number of items in the scale (Gerber and Hall, 2017). As such, the minimum number of respondents expected was 265 (5 x 53 items). The researcher added 35 participants representing participants who might fail to respond and questionnaires that may be returned with insufficient information for analysis. As a result, the ideal sample for the research was 300 participants.

3.2 Questionnaire

The AEL instrument was developed with 53 closed ended items based on the theoretical framework and the extant literature. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the respondents' perceptions of effective leadership. The scale ranged from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). After coming up with the item statements, they were subjected to validation by a team of four experts who were experienced in leadership and management of SMEs (Olson, 2010). The experts recommended the amendment of certain statements to make them clear and the elimination of statements that were not essential. Some statements were added at the suggestion of the experts.

A pilot study with 30 participants, representing 10% of the intended sample of actual respondents was conducted (Aithal and Aithal, 2020). This was done for the purposes of checking face validity (Saunders et al., 2016) and increasing content validity (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The pilot study showed that 20 minutes were sufficient to complete the questionnaire and that respondents had no problems responding to the questionnaire.

The AEL instrument was split into two sections namely section A and section B. The aim of section A was to obtain demographic information such as position in the organisation, gender, age, level of education and tenure with the organisation. Section B was aimed at establishing the respondents' perceptions of the existence of effective leadership from an Afrocentric viewpoint in SMEs using nine constructs namely leadership style, effectiveness of the situational leadership theory, leader

characteristics, follower characteristics, culture, ubuntu, history of the country, stage of economic development of the country and effective leadership.

3.3 Questionnaire administration

Hard copies of the questionnaire were given to respondents because most of them had no access to e-mail facilities at work and for those who had access to personal e-mails, the cost of data was prohibitive. The distribution of the questionnaires followed all ethical considerations and Covid-19 protocols. Questionnaires consisted of a cover letter containing the title of the research, rights of the participants and contact details of both the researcher and academic supervisors. A presentation covering the purpose of the research and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity was done prior to informed consent forms being completed by the participants. The completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher.

3.4 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used for data analysis. Instrument validation was done using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (BTS), factor analysis and Cronbach alpha analysis.

4.0 Results and Discussion

241 questionnaires were returned from the 300 questionnaires that had been distributed giving a response rate of 80.3%. The returns were deemed sufficient for statistical analysis of the data (Saunders et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2007). 62.2% of the respondents were non-managerial while supervisory respondents accounted for 26.1%. 6.6% of the respondents were owner-managers while the remaining 5.0% were managers as shown by table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Organisational position of respondents

Demographic characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Position	Non-managerial	150	62.2
	Supervisor	63	26.1

	Manager	12	5.0
	Owner-manager	16	6.6
	Total	241	100

Table 4.1 above shows that most of the respondents were non-managerial respondents followed by supervisory respondents. This is in line with expectations in most organisations where non-managerial employees will constitute the highest number followed by supervisory employees. Owner-managers were more than managers because most SME owners started their businesses and became actively involved in managing those businesses.

4.1 Validation of the instrument

4.1.1 KMO and BTS

KMO and BTS were used to test for sample adequacy and whether it was viable to proceed with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Gerber and Hall, 2017). The results obtained are shown in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Sample adequacy and significance

KMO and Bartlett's test				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy				0.915
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square			13541.836
	Df			1128
	Sig.			0.000

The KMO value of 0.915 was achieved and was above the threshold of 0.50 (Gerber and Hall, 2017; Gie and Pearce, 2012). This proved that the sample was adequate and it was appropriate for EFA to proceed (Maguraushe, Da Veiga and Martins, 2020; Hair et al., 2014). We can therefore conclude that a strong correlation structure was present (Gerber and Hall, 2017; Gie and Pearce, 2012). The large KMO value indicated that factor analysis unquestionably extracted dependable and distinct

factors. A BTS value of 0.000 for overall statistical significance disclosed that the sample was statistically significant for EFA to proceed since $p < 0.05$ (Gie and Pearce, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). As a result, we can conclude that there were correlations among the variables and a proper and expressive factor analysis was conducted (Hair et al., 2014).

4.1.2 Factor analysis

The principal components analysis technique was utilised because the primary objective was on data reduction (Hair et al., 2014). VARIMAX orthogonal factor rotation was utilised to come up with the final 10 factor rotated matrix shown in figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Rotated component matrix

Rotated Component Matrix ^a										
Item	Factor									
Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q6	0.889									
Q4	0.869									
Q3	0.851									
Q8	0.837									
Q18	0.816									
Q17	0.789									

Q7	0.76 1									
Q5	0.74 3									
Q2	0.73 1									
Q16	0.72 3									
Q23	0.59 6									
Q9		0.85 8								
Q10		0.66 2								
Q11		0.64 2								
Q13			0.94 0							
Q12			0.92 0							
Q14			0.90 8							
Q19			0.76 1							
Q25				0.993						
Q24				0.992						
Q26				0.992						

Q22				0.779					
Q27					0.773				
Q28					0.772				
Q30					0.655				
Q29					0.583				
Q36						0.906			
Q31						0.889			
Q32						0.886			
Q38						0.853			
Q35						0.830			
Q39						0.623			
Q34						0.463			
Q44							0.78 3		
Q45							0.72 7		
Q43							0.68 9		
Q1							0.44 4		
Q40							- 0.638		
Q41							- 0.619		
Q42							-		

								0.540		
Q46									0.912	
Q47									0.912	
Q48									0.873	
Q51										0.853
Q49										0.844
Q50										0.809
Q52										0.779
Q53										0.693

The statement which said *‘leaders seek advice from employees when making decisions’* was removed since its factor loading was less than 0.4 (Hair et al., 2014). The statement which read as *‘employees in this organisation treat each other as family’* and the one which read as *‘employees in this organisation treat the young who are in positions of leadership with respect’* successfully loaded on one factor and were eliminated because the accepted criterion was to group at least three items per factor. Two additional statements, one which read as *‘in this organisation we cooperate with each other’* and the one which read as *‘in this organisation we work together in harmony’* also successfully loaded on a single factor and were also eliminated for the same reason. 11 items successfully loaded in the first factor with the aim of understanding the principal leadership style that was in use in the different SMEs as shown by table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Instrument items on leadership style

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
A. Leadership style					
1. Our leader motivates and inspires us.					
2. Leaders in this organisation show concern for employees.					

3. Leaders in this organisation are approachable.					
4. Employees are rewarded when they do what is expected of them.					
5. Leaders are responsive to the needs of employees.					
6. In our organisation, leaders listen to their employees.					
7. Our leader pays special attention to our individual needs.					
8. Employees are given authority to carry out specific tasks.					
9. Employees receive clear and precise instructions from their superiors.					
10. Our leader works with us in an inclusive manner.					
11. Leadership in this organisation is shared with educated employees.					

The leadership style that is employed in an organisation has a great bearing on whether leadership will be effective or not. As such, to understand perceptions of the existence of effective leadership, there is need to understand perceptions of the leadership style used. 3 items successfully loaded in the second factor with the aim of understanding whether situational leadership theory was effective or not as shown by table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Instrument items on effectiveness of the situational leadership theory

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Effectiveness of the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT)					
1. Our leader gives us freedom to decide what, how, when, and where to do tasks.					
2. Our leader is patient when giving instructions.					

3. Our leader decreases control when we show that we are responsible.					
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The effectiveness of the situational leadership theory depends on how leaders give freedom to employees to decide what, how, when, and where to do tasks in line with their level of maturity (Henkel and Bourdeau, 2018; Shonhiwa, 2016). It also depends on whether leaders are patient when they are giving instructions to subordinates and whether they decrease control when subordinates show that they are responsible. A total of 4 items successfully loaded in the third factor with the aim of understanding leader characteristics essential to stimulate effective leadership as shown by table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Instrument items on leader characteristics

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Leader Characteristics					
1. Knowledgeable leaders effectively lead their followers.					
2. The level of education contributes to the way leaders discharge their responsibilities.					
3. Skilled leaders effectively lead their followers.					
4. Our leader shows respect to followers who are older than him/her.					

Certain characteristics of the leader such as the knowledge they possess, their level of education, the requisite skills they do have and the level of respect they exhibit towards employees who are older than them may have an influence on whether leadership will be effective or not in an African setting. These characteristics may also influence the perception of whether leadership is effective or not. A further 4 items successfully loaded in the fourth factor as shown by table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Instrument items on follower characteristics

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Follower Characteristics					
1. Employees in our organisation respect each other.					
2. Employees in our organisation care for each other.					
3. Employees in our organisation feel for one another.					
4. Employees with the requisite knowledge and skills contribute meaningfully to the organisation.					

These items were aimed at understanding follower characteristics that are essential to stimulate effective leadership. Leadership in an Afrocentric perspective may be affected by whether followers respect and care for each other. It may also be affected by whether the followers feel for one another and whether they have the requisite knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to their respective organisations. Another 4 items successfully loaded in the fifth factor intended to understand the role of culture in engendering effective leadership as shown by table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Instrument items on culture

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Culture					
1. Our leaders value group solidarity.					
2. Our leaders value good social and personal relations.					
3. Our leaders believe in consensus.					
4. Our leaders believe in compromise.					

Effective leadership in an Afrocentric environment depends on whether leaders value group solidarity (Wanasika et al., 2011) and whether they also value good social and personal relations (Magang and Magang, 2017). It is also influenced by the extent to which leaders believe in consensus and compromise (Kuada, 2010). 7 items successfully loaded in the sixth factor with the aim of understanding the role ubuntu plays in stimulating effective leadership as shown by table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Instrument items on ubuntu

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Ubuntu					
1. Our leaders care for us.					
2. Our leaders exhibit the value of humanness.					
3. Our leaders respect the dignity of their employees.					
4. We are free to express our opinions.					
5. Leaders in our organisation tolerate divergent views.					
6. In our organisation the interests of the group take precedence over the interests of individuals.					
7. In our organisation we stand together as a group.					

Effective leaders in an Afrocentric setting should lead in line with the ubuntu philosophy (Volmink, 2019; Galperin and Alamuri, 2017). Leaders should care for their employees (Nyanga, 2013) and respect their dignity (April and Peters, 2011). Effective leadership demands that leaders should allow followers to freely express their opinions and when freely expressed, the leaders should tolerate the divergent views. Where effective leadership exists, organisational members stand together as a group, prioritising the interests of the group instead of individual interests (Metz, 2019; Grobler and Singh, 2018).

4 items successfully loaded in the seventh factor and were intended at understanding how traditional leadership engenders effective leadership. The 4 items are shown in table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Instrument items on traditional leadership

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Traditional leadership					
1. Employees participate in key activities such as planning.					
2. Decision making is distributed.					
3. Leaders make decisions based on the agreement and consent of all.					
4. Employees participate in decision making.					

Afrocentric effective leadership demands that followers participate in the decisions that affect them and participate in key activities of the organisation. This is in line with how leadership was traditionally practiced before the continent was colonised. In addition, effectiveness depends on whether decisions are made based on the agreement and consent of everyone. 3 items successfully loaded in the eighth factor with the aim of understanding the impact of the history of the country on effective leadership as shown by table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Instrument items on history of the country

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
History of the country					
1. Our leaders are domineering.					
2. Our leaders discriminate against us.					
3. Our leaders make us look inferior.					

To understand the existence of effective leadership in an Afrocentric perspective, there is need to understand whether leaders are domineering and discriminate against followers. There is also need to understand whether leaders make followers look inferior. The history of colonialism that most African countries including Zimbabwe endured left an indelible mark. Certain behaviours that were practiced by colonialists were accepted and continued by African leaders even after the demise of colonialism. These behaviours such as domination, discrimination and making followers look inferior are passed to succeeding generations with notable negative effects on effective leadership.

A further 3 items successfully loaded in the ninth factor and were aimed at understanding how effective leadership is impacted by the stage of economic development of the country as shown by table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: Instrument items on the stage of economic development of the country

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Stage of economic development of the country					
1. Employees are afraid to challenge their leaders.					
2. Employees are afraid to demand accountability from their leaders.					
3. Employees are afraid to demand transparency from their leaders.					

In order to assess whether effective leadership exists or not, there is need to gauge whether followers in an African setting are afraid to challenge their leaders. There is also need to interrogate whether followers fear to demand accountability and transparency from their leaders. The numerous economic challenges that the country has experienced have seen its economic development being negatively affected. As such, followers, though an important constituent in the leadership matrix, might fail to do what is expected of them to enhance effective leadership because of fear that

their job security might be compromised. The final 5 items successfully loaded in the tenth factor and were intended on understanding whether leadership was effective in the different SMEs as shown by table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Instrument items on effective leadership

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
Effectiveness leadership					
1. Employees are excited to come to work and provide their all.					
2. Employees are motivated to take on additional responsibilities.					
3. Employees are committed to the decisions made by their superior.					
4. Managers assist employees in career development.					
5. The goals of the organisation are consistently met.					

Where effective leadership exists employees will be excited to come to work and provide their all. While they are at work, they will be motivated to take on additional responsibilities (Naile and Selesho, 2014) and be committed to the decisions that their superiors would have made. Effective leaders actively assist their followers in career development (Mourao, 2018; Litano and Major, 2016). In an organisation where leadership is effective, goals are consistently met (Madanchian and Taherdoost, 2019; Su and Baird, 2017).

4.1.3 Instrument reliability

Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument (Hair et al., 2014). The Cronbach alpha values for the new factors are shown in table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: Cronbach alpha values

Theme/ Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Leadership style (LS)	11	0.957

ESLT	3	0.804
Leader characteristics (LC)	4	0.702
Follower characteristics (FC)	4	0.878
Culture (C)	4	0.902
Ubuntu (U)	7	0.944
Traditional leadership (TL)	4	0.815
History of the country (HC2)	3	0.766
SEDC	3	0.961
Effective leadership (EL)	5	0.896
Total	48	

The Cronbach alpha coefficient values for all the 10 factors were above 0.7. This showed that a strong and solid item covariance existed (Maguraushe et al., 2020; Gerber and Hall, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). It can therefore be concluded that the values were appropriate and acceptable for the objective of the study. For new instruments, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.6 is appropriate and acceptable (Banerjee, 2015).

5.0 Conclusion

An AEL instrument was developed and validated for this research to measure respondents' perception of the existence of effective leadership in Zimbabwean SMEs. The results from the validated questionnaire led to the devising of 10 new factors with a total of 48 instrument items. The questionnaire can be used by other researchers and policy makers to measure perceptions of the existence of effective leadership in African SMEs so that early interventions can be implemented to avoid high failure rates.

6.0 Limitations and guidance for future research

The research was limited to Bulawayo's Central Business Area (CBA). Future research should aim to extend the study to other geographical areas in Zimbabwe and Africa.

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