

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND LEADERSHIP STYLES ON LECTURERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN RIVERS STATE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY, PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Lecturers' productivity in higher education is often characterised by their ability to effectively convert institutional resources into beneficial outcomes in teaching, research, and community service, contributing to institutional and national objectives. However, issues such as heavy workloads, work-related stress, and various structural and systemic challenges often impede this productivity, particularly in developing nations. This study investigated the interplay of effective school decision-making processes and leadership styles as key paradigms for enhancing lecturers' productivity at Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology (RSCHST), Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted, and the study population consisted of 105 permanent lecturers across the eleven schools of the college. The researcher used a total enumeration approach, including all lecturers in the study. Data were collected through a self-structured questionnaire validated by experts and pilot-tested, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating high reliability. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were used to analyse the data. Findings indicate that participatory decision-making (78; 74.4%, mean = 4.25, SD = 0.48) and democratic leadership style (75; 71.4%, mean = 4.20, SD = 0.49) positively influence lecturers' productivity, whereas autocratic decision-making (30; 28.6%, mean = 2.85, SD = 0.54) and centralised decision-making (30; 28.6%, mean = 2.90, SD = 0.55) hinder it. The study concludes that institutional policies fostering inclusive decision-making and adaptive leadership enhance lecturers' teaching, research, and administrative outputs. Recommendations include training college administrators in effective leadership, involving lecturers in institutional decisions, and regular assessment of decision-making and leadership effectiveness to boost productivity.

Keywords: Decision-making processes, Higher education, Leadership styles, Lecturers' productivity, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Lecturers' productivity is central to academic excellence and institutional objectives in higher education, defined as the effectiveness and efficiency with which academic staff perform core roles of teaching, research, and administration, often measured through teaching quality, research output, and engagement in community or institutional service (Suraka, 2025) or convert resources into quality outcomes in teaching, research, community service, student mentoring, consulting, innovation, and administrative leadership (Adebayo & Nwankwo, 2021; Dabara *et al.*, 2019; Omojola, 2020). This extends beyond mere output volume to alignment with institutional goals; stakeholder expectations (e.g., students, employers, society); and quality standards set by regulatory bodies (Karimi *et al.*, 2024). According to Maia *et al.* (2025), the ability of academic staff to efficiently transform institutional resources into worthwhile outputs in teaching, research, community engagement, and administrative service is best captured by a multifaceted concept of lecturers' productivity. Maia *et al.* further stated that both quantity (such as the number of courses taught or papers published) and quality (such as teaching effectiveness, research impact, and community relevance) are components of productivity, and these outputs should not be viewed as separate activities but rather as part of institutional and national development priorities. In many university systems, according to Brimah and Oduwole (2024), productivity is assessed through indicators such as quality and quantity of publications, teaching effectiveness, curriculum development, student supervision, and engagement in professional and community activities. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, diverse studies, including Osayomwanbor *et al.* (2024), assert that productivity is influenced by multiple factors, including institutional policies, resource availability, and organisational culture. Two crucial factors that affect productivity are school decision-making processes and leadership styles (Ladipo, 2022; Owuamanam, 2020).

Decision-making refers to the process through which school administrators formulate policies, allocate resources, and implement strategies that affect staff and student outcomes (Okeke, 2020). Effective decision-making involves consultation, transparency, and inclusiveness, enabling lecturers to feel valued, motivated, and engaged. Conversely, centralised or opaque decision-making may reduce staff morale and engagement, limiting productivity. From empirical viewpoints, Agarwa and Agarwa (2022) conducted a systematic review of decision-making models in higher education management, classifying them into rational, intuitive, and hybrid approaches. They found that model choice impacts decision effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction, with public universities achieving 20% higher strategic success using rational models and private ones seeing 15% greater satisfaction via hybrids. However, the review remains theoretical, overlooking day-to-day staff productivity in specialised contexts like colleges of health sciences or Port Harcourt's unique challenges.

It also underscores the importance of aligning decision-making models with leadership styles and specific stakeholder needs. However, it lacks practical insights on how these models affect daily staff productivity in specific contexts, particularly in Port Harcourt. The current study on the impact of effective school decision-making processes and leadership styles on lecturers' productivity at Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, addresses this by empirically linking practices like communication, motivation, leadership, and stakeholder engagement to productivity in this local health-focused institution. Equally, Ayeni and Ojo (2022) examined principals' decision-making strategies' impact on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Ondo North, Nigeria, using surveys of 150 administrators and 600 teachers. Strategies like consultation, collaboration, feedback, and corporate review positively influenced productivity and academic performance, though open-door approaches contributed least. Limited to one district and secondary schools, it neglects broader management practices and tertiary-level lecturers. The present study extends this by focusing on comprehensive management practices' effects on lecturers' productivity in the Rivers State College of Health Sciences and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, offering tailored evidence for such settings. In South Africa, Ndjama and Westhuizen (2023) explored participative decision-making's link to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) among 253 South African academics, finding positive associations and recommending data-driven cultures. Namoc (2025) analysed decision-making and leadership challenges among school heads in the Matalom North District, noting low teacher involvement and correlations with tensions, while advocating collaborative reforms. Both studies emphasise participation but limit it to perceptions, basic education, or non-productivity outcomes, without tertiary health educational institution contexts. The current research fills these gaps by directly assessing management practices' impact on lecturers' productivity in a Nigerian college of health institutions.

In South-East Nigeria, Onu (2025) assessed data-driven decision-making in two Nsukka secondary schools, showing benefits for performance, resources, and staff via head teacher surveys. Constrained by its small private school sample, single-source data, and secondary focus, it overlooks broader practices and tertiary productivity. The ongoing

study at Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology bridges this by examining specific management practices' influence on lecturers' productivity in a specialised Port Harcourt institution, providing context-specific, outcome-orientated insights. In another development, leadership styles define the manner in which school leaders guide, motivate, and supervise staff. Studies indicate that leadership styles such as democratic and transformational leadership positively impact staff performance by promoting participation, collaboration, and innovation (Omoruyi & Agbo, 2022). In contrast, autocratic or laissez-faire leadership may create a rigid work environment, reducing initiative and output. The Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, plays a pivotal role in producing skilled health and management professionals. Ensuring high productivity among lecturers is essential for maintaining educational standards. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how institutional decision-making processes and leadership styles shape lecturer productivity at this college. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of these factors on academic output and institutional effectiveness.

In the empirical perspectives of leadership styles in educational institutions, Hariansyah et al. (2021) studied the impact of school leadership style and environment on primary school teachers' performance in Kisam Tinggi District using a quantitative research method. Data were collected through documentation and questionnaires, revealing a positive and significant correlation between the principal's leadership style and teachers' performance ($r_{X_1Y} = 0.725$, significantly greater than $r_{table} 0.178$).

The findings also indicated that the school environment positively influences teachers' performance. Additionally, a combined significant effect of both leadership style and school environment on teacher performance was noted. However, the results are limited to primary education and cannot be generalised to higher education settings, which involve more complex administration and policy aspects. The study aims to address gaps to enhance cooperation and ensure quality educational outcomes for societal benefit.

Equally, Onia and Alshafea (2022) limit their focus to Sudanese secondary schools, rendering it less applicable to Nigerian higher education, particularly in health science and management colleges. It overlooks unique Nigerian issues such as resource constraints and cultural factors affecting lateness and absenteeism in Rivers State. The study targets secondary school teachers, neglecting lecturers who manage research, teaching, and administration. A study centred on Rivers State lecturers could address these gaps. While examining leadership styles, it fails to consider broader school management practices like school decision-making processes linked to productivity. The recommendations for democratic leadership lack attention to motivational factors critical for enhancing lecturer productivity in Rivers State. Wakkala et al. (2022) found limited overall influence of leadership styles on teacher performance in Nigeria, emphasising that transformational leadership positively influences performance. Ekpemogu et al. (2023) highlighted various leadership styles as predictors of teacher productivity in Rivers State's public schools, recommending against laissez-faire styles. The studies collectively underscore the importance of leadership styles while suggesting broader management practices like school decision-making processes need examination, particularly in higher education contexts, to improve lecturer productivity. These findings call for further research into comprehensive management beyond leadership alone.

In addition, Nyabuli and Mwila (2024) examined how school head leadership styles affect teacher performance in Ilala City, Tanzania, through a qualitative case study involving 42 participants. Challenges such as resistance to change, resource limitations, and heavy workloads were identified. School heads responded by creating supportive environments and setting clear goals. The study calls for support structures and better management of resources and workloads to boost teacher productivity. This study focuses on secondary school leadership and teacher performance in Tanzania, leaving a gap in higher education contexts. It does not explore school decision-making processes specific to lecturers in health sciences or tertiary education institutions. The current study addresses this by examining impacts of school decision-making processes and leadership styles on lecturers' productivity at a specialised college in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Despite the strategic importance of lecturers in higher education, there are concerns regarding low productivity in some Nigerian institutions, including the Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology. Reports indicate delayed research outputs, limited participation in institutional programmes, and low engagement in professional development activities (Nwachukwu, 2020; Osayomwanbor et al., 2024). One contributing factor is the decision-making process in schools. Decision-making that excludes lecturers or lacks transparency may undermine staff commitment

and reduce productivity. Similarly, leadership styles significantly affect lecturers' motivation and efficiency. Autocratic leadership that centralises authority may discourage initiative, while democratic and transformational leadership enhances participation and fosters a conducive environment for academic excellence (Eze & Chukwu, 2021; Maia *et al.*, 2025). Although these relationships are recognised in organisational theory, few studies have empirically examined how decision-making processes and leadership styles jointly influence lecturers' productivity in specialised Nigerian institutions. This study investigates these dynamics to provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing academic productivity.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of school decision-making processes and leadership styles on lecturers' productivity. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the extent to which school decision-making processes influence lecturers' productivity.
2. Examine how different leadership styles enhance or inhibit lecturers' productivity.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do school decision-making processes influence lecturers' productivity in Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do school leadership styles influence lecturers' productivity in Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

Systems thinking theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s was used to discuss lecturers' productivity. Many academics, such as Elsawah *et al.* (2022), Morgan (2024), Ndaruhutse *et al.* (2019), Rahdar *et al.* (2023), and Spivack (2021), claim that Ludwig von Bertalanffy was the main founder of system thinking theory (STT) in the 1940s, with his work on general systems theory (GST) being widely acknowledged as the fundamental idea. In lectures beginning in 1937, he initially presented this concept, and starting in 1946, he released significant works. Ludwig von Bertalanffy established systems thinking theory. He published important works beginning in the middle of the 20th century, such as "Zu einer allgemeinen Systemlehre" (1945) and "An Outline of General System Theory" (1950). In 1968, he published his seminal work "General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications".

Lutkevich (2025) posits that systems thinking is a holistic analytical approach that studies the interconnections and functions of a system's components over time, contrasting with traditional methods that focus on isolated parts. It is relevant in fields such as medicine, environmental studies, and education, focusing on how behaviours emerge from feedback processes (Elsawah *et al.*, 2022). Key tools include behaviour-over-time graphs and causal loop diagrams. The theory emphasises "wholeness", understanding systems as interconnected elements producing emergent properties, which addresses the limitations of reductionist approaches (Morgan, 2024). Systems thinking is pivotal in school management, encouraging leaders to view educational systems as dynamic, interconnected entities, leading to improved productivity and decision-making that considers systemic impacts rather than isolated factors, according to Rahdar *et al.* (2023). The concept of lecturers' productivity is framed through systems thinking as an interaction among institutional policies, management practices, lecturer motivation, resource availability, and external pressures. Productivity includes research output, teaching quality, and administrative contributions, all reliant on the educational system's integration of these factors. Applying systems thinking can pinpoint institutional bottlenecks and facilitate targeted interventions to enhance lecturer effectiveness and satisfaction. Critics, however, argue that it can create silos and overlook essential learning integration, leading to a reductionist view and neglecting innovation (Elujekwute *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, it may face challenges regarding practical implementation and the philosophical implications of education, according to Rahdar *et al.* (2023), such as resistance from faculty, lack of training, and difficulties in aligning diverse educational philosophies within institutions.

Despite critiques, advocates assert that systems thinking fosters holistic views and collaborative frameworks in educational settings, improving productivity through aligned resources, policies, and feedback mechanisms (Raspini *et al.*, 2025). This is particularly relevant in Nigerian higher education, where it supports capacity-building efforts directly

linked to faculty productivity. Administrative leaders are crucial in this context, responsible for hiring and compensating staff, thereby impacting student performance as an indicator of institutional success (Norqvist & Arlestig, 2021).

Decision-making processes and leadership styles were discussed using Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) by James V. Downton (1973), cited in Al-Katib and Carleton (2024). Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), originating in the early 1990s and notably developed by scholars such as James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass, emphasises engagement with followers through shared values and goals, contrasting with transactional leadership (Alzoraiki *et al.*, 2024; Datti & Inuwa, 2023). It has gained traction in educational leadership, where it promotes empowerment and a strong, unified school culture (Onyebuchi *et al.*, 2025). Key developments include the eight dimensions proposed by Kenneth Leithwood and colleagues, such as building vision and fostering participation, which enhance school effectiveness. Transformational leadership integrates bottom-up approaches, addressing the limitations of traditional instructional leadership models while encouraging commitment to higher educational goals. In educational leadership, transformational leadership is also a central and influential style. According to Al-Katib and Carleton (2024), transformational leadership, characterised by the 4 I's, comprises four key behaviours: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealised influence focuses on leaders as role models who build trust and respect through ethical behaviour and empathy (Datti & Inuwa, 2023). Inspirational motivation involves inspiring followers with a compelling vision that fosters resilience and purpose. Intellectual stimulation encourages followers to think critically and creatively, promoting innovation and leadership among them (Berkovich, 2016). Individualised consideration highlights genuine care for individuals' needs and growth, ensuring all voices, especially marginalised ones, are heard (Kareem *et al.*, 2023). Together, these components create an effective leadership model in various organisational contexts. Transformational leadership emphasises the role of visionary leaders in inspiring and fostering staff commitment, particularly within higher education. This leadership style promotes professional development, innovation, and collaboration among lecturers, contributing to increased academic productivity and institutional improvement (Al-Ahmad *et al.*, 2020; Voon *et al.*, 2025).

Critics highlight issues such as the overemphasis on charisma and the potential for misuse of transformational leadership for unethical ends. Cross-cultural analyses suggest varying efficacy across different workplace cultures. Despite critiques, benefits include enhanced organisational cohesion and collaboration and increased job satisfaction, as transformational leaders create shared visions and provide individualised support (Sianipar & Putri 2024). The theory is founded on four key dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Mahmood *et al.*, 2025; Mohiuddin & Mohamed, 2025). Transformational leadership is crucial for improving educational outcomes, lecturer engagement, and institutional resilience in the face of challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. This research design is appropriate for capturing the perceptions, experiences, and behaviours of lecturers at a single point in time (Kumar, 2020). The population comprised 105 permanent lecturers across the eleven schools of the College. The study employed total enumeration, including all lecturers, to ensure comprehensive data collection. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in educational administration and pilot-tested with 10 lecturers from a similar institution, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating high reliability. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, to answer the research questions. Tables were used to summarise results for clarity. Ethical adherence was observed, and there was no conflict of interest.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	58	55.2
Gender: Female	47	44.8
Total	105	100
Age 25–35	40	38.1
Age 36–45	45	42.9

Age 46–55	20	19.0
Total	105	100
Lecturer Rank: Assistant Lecturer	35	33.3
Lecturer Rank: Lecturer II	40	38.1
Lecturer Rank: Senior Lecturer	30	28.6
Total	105	100

Table 1: The demographic profile of respondents shows that male lecturers comprised the majority (55.2%), with females making up 44.8%. The age distribution indicates that most lecturers were in the 36–45 years range (42.9%), followed closely by those aged 25–35 years (38.1%), while only 19% were between 46 and 55 years. This suggests that the respondents were largely mid-career academics. In terms of academic rank, the largest group was Lecturer II (38.1%), followed by Assistant Lecturers (33.3%) and Senior Lecturers (28.6%), demonstrating a balanced representation across early to mid-career academic positions.

Research Question 1: Table 2: Influence of School Decision-Making Processes

Decision-Making Practice	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Participatory decision-making	78	74.3	4.25	0.48
Transparency in decisions	70	66.7	4.10	0.50
Consultation of lecturers	68	64.8	4.05	0.52
Centralized decision-making	30	28.6	2.90	0.55
Decision implementation follow-up	60	57.1	3.80	0.50
Average			3.82	0.51

Decision Rule: When the average mean value is less than (<) or equal to 2.50, and the average standard deviation value is less than 0.45, it signifies no significant influence of the school decision-making process on lecturers' productivity. But when the average mean is > 2.50 and the standard deviation is > 0.45, it connotes significant influence of school decision-making processes on lecturers' productivity. Table 2: Regarding the influence of school decision-making processes on lecturers' productivity, the data indicated that participatory decision-making was the most impactful, with 74.3% of respondents (mean = 4.25, SD = 0.48) highlighting its importance. This was closely followed by transparency in decisions (66.7%, mean = 4.10, SD = 0.50) and consultation of lecturers (64.8%; mean = 4.05, SD = 0.52), suggesting that lecturers are more motivated and productive when they are actively involved in decisions that affect their work. Decision implementation follow-up was moderately influential (57.1%, mean = 3.80, SD = 0.50), while centralised decision-making had the least positive impact (28.6%, mean = 2.90, SD = 0.55), indicating that top-down or opaque decision processes are less conducive to productivity. Overall, these findings emphasise that inclusive and transparent decision-making practices enhance lecturers' sense of value, engagement, and commitment. Conclusively, Table 2 showed the average mean value was 3.82 and the average standard deviation value was 0.51, which were greater than 2.50 and 0.45, as stated in the decision rule. Therefore, one can conclude that all five indicators of decision-making practices have significant influence on lecturers' productivity because they both have an average mean above 3.50 and an average standard deviation value above 0.45, respectively.

Research Question 2: Table 3: Influence of Leadership Styles

Leadership Style	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Democratic	75	71.4	4.20	0.49
Transformational	68	64.8	4.05	0.52
Autocratic	30	28.6	2.85	0.54
Laissez-faire	35	33.3	3.00	0.56
Average			3.53	0.53

Table 3: In examining the influence of leadership styles, democratic leadership emerged as the most effective, with 71.4% of respondents recognising its positive impact on productivity. Transformational leadership also significantly enhanced productivity (64.8%), highlighting the value of leadership that fosters participation, innovation, and collaboration. In contrast, autocratic (28.6%) and laissez-faire (33.3%) leadership styles were less effective, suggesting that overly controlling or hands-off approaches may reduce engagement and diminish motivation. These results indicate that lecturers thrive under leaders who encourage involvement, provide support, and inspire professional growth, while rigid or disengaged leadership styles may undermine productivity.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate a slight predominance of male lecturers (55.2%) compared with females (44.8%), suggesting a relatively balanced gender composition within the academic workforce (Wakkala *et al.*, 2022). The age distribution further shows that the majority of lecturers fall within the 36–45 years bracket (42.9%), with a substantial proportion in the 25–35 years group (38.1%) and a smaller segment aged 46–55 years (19%). This pattern aligns with previous findings that mid-career academics often dominate teaching staff populations in higher education institutions (Ekpemogu *et al.*, 2023), likely reflecting retention after early career progression and before retirement thresholds. In terms of academic rank, Lecturer II constituted the largest category (38.1%), followed by Assistant Lecturers (33.3%) and Senior Lecturers (28.6%). This distribution suggests a broad representation of early to mid-career academic staff, providing a robust basis for understanding experiences across professional stages (Nguyen, 2021). The balanced sample across ranks enhances the internal validity of findings regarding workplace processes and leadership perceptions (Nyaibuli & Mwila, 2024).

Analysis of school decision-making processes indicates that participatory decision-making is perceived as the most influential on lecturers' productivity, with 74.3% of respondents reporting its positive impact. This result concurs with organisational behaviour theory, which emphasises that involvement in decision processes enhances job satisfaction and performance (Ayeni & Ojo, 2022). Similarly, the high endorsement of transparency (66.7%) and consultation (64.8%) reinforces literature asserting that transparent and consultative processes build trust, commitment, and psychological ownership among staff (Nyaibuli & Mwila, 2024). Conversely, centralised decision-making was rated least positively (28.6%), indicating that top-down approaches may inhibit motivation and productivity—consistent with findings that autocratic structures often reduce employee engagement (Hariansyah *et al.*, 2021). The moderate effect of decision implementation follow-ups (57.1%) suggests that while execution monitoring is important, the process of inclusion and transparency plays a more central role in shaping lecturers' productivity outcomes (Ndjama & Westhuizen, 2023).

Regarding leadership styles, democratic leadership emerged as the most effective, with 71.4% of respondents indicating its positive influence on their productivity. This aligns with theories of participative leadership that associate shared decision-making, collaborative goal setting, and empowerment with higher performance and job satisfaction (Okoye & Ndidiamaka, 2020). Transformational leadership was also strongly associated with productivity (64.8%), further supporting research that leaders who articulate vision, inspire innovation, and foster professional growth enhance academic staff engagement and outcomes (Nyaibuli & Mwila, 2024). In contrast, autocratic (28.6%) and laissez-faire (33.3%) leadership were perceived as less effective, reflecting broad evidence that overly controlling or disengaged leadership undermines motivation, clarity, and organisational commitment (Sarwar *et al.*, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that school decision-making processes and leadership styles significantly influence lecturers' productivity at the Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology. Participatory and transparent decision-making, coupled with democratic and transformational leadership, enhance teaching, research, and administrative output. Conversely, centralised decision-making and rigid leadership practices limit lecturers' engagement and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Management and government should promote participatory decision-making in educational institutions at all levels by involving lecturers in policy formulation, planning, and resource allocation to enhance ownership and productivity.

2. Government and stakeholders of higher educational institutions, including health, should carry on frequent training on leadership: Conduct leadership development programmes for administrators to adopt democratic and transformational leadership styles.

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