ScholarOne - Impact of Leadership Behavior on Organizational Change Management in Public Universities of Ethiopia: A Study of Leadership Influences and Change Processes

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April 03, 2024

Abstract

The study aimed to examine how leadership behavior affects organizational change management process within public universities in Ethiopia. It utilized a mixed research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The research design employed was descriptive and explanatory. The sample size consisted of 581 academic staff and academic leaders who were selected using systematic random sampling techniques. This ensured that a representative sample was obtained from the target population. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected data. The study findings revealed that a positive and significant relationship was found between autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transactional leadership behaviors and organizational change management. However, there was a negative and significant relationship between transformational leadership behavior and organizational change management. Additionally, the study identified significant differences in the perceptions of leadership behaviors and organizational change management between academic staff and academic leaders. Based on the study findings, the authors recommended that leaders in public universities customize and apply the identified positive leadership behaviors (autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transactional) to effectively manage organizational change.

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of the 21st century, organizations across the globe face numerous challenges that demand effective leadership and practiced change management strategies. This is particularly true in the context of public universities in Ethiopia, where the need for transformation and adaptability has become increasingly crucial. As Ethiopia strives to achieve its developmental goals and enhance the quality of higher education, the role of leadership behavior and the efficacy of organizational change management processes in public universities cannot be smart. In this regard, Public universities play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Ethiopia by nurturing intellectual capital, fostering innovation, and contributing to socio-economic development (UNESCO, 1998). However, these institutions face multifaceted challenges such as limited resources, outdated systems, and the need to align with global standards (Yizengaw T, 2008). To overcome these obstacles and drive positive change, effective leadership behavior and a well-structured change management process are essential.

Besides, leadership roles have a substantial impact on the ability to successfully manage organizational change(Obiwuru et al. , 2011). The question of whether an organization should change in the modern world is no longer relevant; instead, it is a question of when, how, where, and in what way they need to change given the new technologies, unstable demographics, fluctuating customer needs, changing economies, remodeling governments, and fierce competition (Gupta et al. , 2012). In supporting this thought, Mansaray (2019) pointed out that in order to deal with the constantly debatable rivalry in the global environment,
leadership has grown to be a crucial component for a successful transition in any organization, including higher education institutions.

The same author revealed that there are a variety of leadership behaviors that can support change management processes, ranging from authoritarian leadership behavior, democratic leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, servant leadership, strategic leadership, bureaucratic leadership behavior, and consultative and participative leadership (Mansaray, 2019).

Researchers also concur that organizational change relies increasingly on leadership behavior helps to sustain and enhance organizational competitiveness (Odoardi et al., 2015). When examining the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management. Additionally, several studies stress the importance of leadership in managing organizational change at the workplace in order to achieve organizational success (Gong et al., 2009). The success of organizational change is therefore dependent on the efficiency of organizational leaders because leadership and organizational change mutually dependent and connected like two parts of a whole.

Furthermore, various researchers noted that the concepts of leadership and organizational change have frequently been closely linked and have a strong relationship. So, while change management depends on leadership, till today there has been little integration of these two in literature (Oreg & Berson, 2019). In this sense, the current study intended to investigate the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management at public universities in Ethiopia.

**Research Questions**

What leadership behavior affects the success of organizational change management process in the public university?

How do you perceive the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change are interconnected in public universities? Is it a positive or a negative relationship?

**Literature Review**

**Leadership behavior and Organizational change management**

Leadership behavior is a pattern of conduct that leaders’ appreciate more highly to use (Chiok, 2001). While Mosadeghrad (2003) sees leadership behaviour as a combination of attitudes, traits and skills that a manager uses in various situations in line with personal and organizational ideals. To encourage their employees to perform to the best of their abilities in a variety of scenarios and with numerous subordinates, managers employ a variety of behaviour (Kreitner, 2008).

Furthermore, Yukl (2012) asserts that analysts have spent more time and effort on leadership behavior than any other perspective of leadership. According to yukl the principal line of research on leadership behavior looks at how leaders use their time throughout the day, how they specifically design their activities, and how they behave at work (Yukl, 2012).

On the other hand, Change is a process that involves something being made different or becoming different (Scott, 2004). As Hussain et al. (2018) described that organizational change refers to the explanation of the movement of an organization from a current known state to an unknown desired future state. Thus, modern organizations must practice effective change management. In the case that the organizations successfully and competently actualize, and adjust to the change of the market, change management “sanctions the organization to capture an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage” (Lorenzoni, I., et al., 2007).

**Dimensions of leadership behaviors**

The literature on organizational leadership, which extent the classical leadership behavior through emerging periods, contains many leadership behaviors. The combination of both classical and emergent leadership behaviors was necessary for different leadership behaviors were required for various circumstances and each
leader needed to be aware of when to use a certain strategy during organizational change. As Kurt (1947) distinguished three major behaviors namely: authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire leadership behaviors. On the other hand, Steven et al. (2015) discovered four leadership behaviours: Laissez-faire, transactional, transformational and change oriented have an impact on the change management process. Besides, Rensis Likert also identified four distinct leadership behaviour in his research at the university of Michigan in the 1950’s: Authoritative, Benevolent, consultative and participative leadership behaviors. Furthermore, Ali, A. and Dahie, A.(2015) noted that the most obvious leadership behaviors in business organizations include Autocratic leadership, transformational leadership, Laissez Faire leadership, servant leadership, transactional leadership, democratic leadership, strategic leadership, and Bureaucratic leadership. Investigating these all leadership behaviors in this study makes the paper bulky.

Researcher noted that each theory illustrates the distinct dimensions of leadership and explains the leader and follower relation in different ways (Rasool, 2015). Other scholars revealed that the theory approach describes different dimensions of leadership and their effects on the relationship between leaders and their followers (Garg & Ramjee, 2013). Based on this fact, the following five dimensions of leadership behavior are the focus of this study:

**Autocratic Leadership**

Researchers stated that Autocratic leadership behavior has been shown empirically to impede the progression of change inside the organization with regard to how it aligns with the context of change management (Bennis, 2000). The author revealed that despite the unfavorable connotations between an authoritarian leadership behavior & change, there are circumstances in which they may be appropriate. The speedy decision-making processes associated with this leadership behavior would quick up the change process and allow one person to take charge of the change to guarantee a uniform approach. Similarly, scholars revealed that autocratic leadership behavior is a more flexible strategy where the followers are permitted to be innovative, experiment and take calculated risk which will give the follower a sense of belonging and involvement to the organization (Goleman, 2011).

Northouse further identified positives and negatives of using such behavior for leadership. The positives are that there is a person to give direction and clarity to employee’s work which will bring about productivity and efficiency enabling accomplishments of goals in a shorter period. On the other hand this behavior will hamper individuality and will create dependence on the leader which will result in subordinates losing interest and becoming dissatisfied with their work (Northouse, 2009).

**Democratic Leadership**

Democratic leadership is the growing understanding that ‘good’ leadership nowadays includes diversity and inclusivity, both within leadership teams and inside organizations. The leader builds trust, respect and commitment from the employees. Communication, collaboration and team leadership plays an important role (Chin & Trimble, 2014). Other scholars also revealed that the leader will listen to employee’s ideas and concerns thus learning how to keep the spirit of the employees high. This behavior will work best when the leader itself is uncertain about the path to be taken. The drawback of such a behavior is that the leader will be receiving endless opinions resulting in difficulty of making a proper decision (Goleman, 2011). Furthermore, Northouse (2009) said that democratic leaders always try to treat its subordinates fairly. This is a collective approach of leadership where the leader will be consulting subordinates.

**Laissez-Faire leadership**

As to Marturano and Gosling (2008) articulated that Laissez-Faire leadership behaviour is known as the “hands-off” approach since the leader gives the team members a little or no direction, providing the employees with needless freedom. The employees have the power to make decisions, decide objectives, and how to handle problems. As Northhouse mentioned this leadership mainly relies on good team work and good interpersonal relationship skills also can be useful in businesses where creative ideas are important. Unlike the autocratic method this behavior of leadership can be highly motivational as people have control over their working life.
Transactional leadership

Rowold, J. (2014) defined transactional leaders are those who are aware of the goals they have for their careers and make an effort to figure out how to get there. They decided if one’s performance merits receiving rewards; whether rewards should be exchanged; whether rewards should be assured for performance; and whether they are open to one’s own self-interests if they can be satisfied by finishing the task at hand. According to Groves and Larocca (2011) offering remuneration motivates employees. Besides, Rowold (2014) asserts that the leader holds the team members accountable regardless of the competence or availability resources.

Active management by exception, contingent reward, and passive management by exception is the three separate methods of transactional leadership that help to influence employees (Harold, 2011). Inactive management by exception, the transactional leader looks for errors, lapses in judgment, deviations from the norm, complaints, violations of rules and regulations, and failures and takes corrective action before or as soon as they occur (Caldwell, 2011).

Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders are those who inspire and strengthen their team members to achieve both goals and, in process, develop their own leadership potential. They also provide support to the followers’ request, give them power, and adjusting the targets and objectives of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Oreg and Berson (2019) employees are less likely to advocate for significant organizational change when transformational leadership is in place. Values for Change were strongly linked to the dynamism generated by the transformational leader. As a result, this leadership behaviour is effective at inspiring change, which is motivational. On top of this, there are four elements of Transformational Leadership: The first one is Individualized Consideration means the degree to which the leader attends to each follower’s needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower’s concerns and needs.

The second one is Intellectual Stimulation refers to the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers’ ideas. Leaders with this behavior stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who think independently. The third of transformational leadership is Inspirational Motivation that the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. Followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act. The forth and the last but not the least one is Idealized Influence which Provides a role model for high ethical behavior, instills pride, gains respect and trust (Oreg & Berson, 2019).

Aspects of change management

Change management in higher education institutions encompasses various aspects that are crucial for successfully implementing and navigating organizational changes. These aspects of change management provide a framework for addressing the complexities and challenges associated with implementing change in higher education institutions. By considering these elements and incorporating best practices, institutions can increase the likelihood of successful and sustainable change.

Leadership and Vision: Effective leadership involves setting a clear vision for change, inspiring others and providing guidance throughout the process (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Leaders should articulate the reasons behind the change and create a sense of urgency and purpose.

Stakeholder Engagement: as researchers mentioned that engaging stakeholders is crucial as they play a significant role in the success and sustainability of change efforts in higher education institutions. This includes involving faculty, staff, administrators, students, alumni, and external partners in the decision-making process, seeking their input, and addressing their concerns (Middlehurst, 2019).
Communication and Transparency: As Kotter indicated, open and transparent communication is essential for managing change effectively. Clear and frequent communication helps stakeholders understand the need for change, the expected outcomes, and their role in the process. It is important to use various communication channels and tailor messages to different audiences (Kotter, 2012).

Change Planning and Implementation: Developing a comprehensive change plan is critical. This involves defining clear goals, establishing timelines, allocating necessary resources, and identifying strategies for implementation. It is important to break down the change into manageable phases and involve key stakeholders in the planning process (Cohen, 2019).

Training and Support: Change often requires individuals to acquire new skills, adopt new technologies, or modify their behaviors. Providing training programs, professional development opportunities, and ongoing support helps stakeholders navigate the change process, build their capabilities, and overcome resistance (Fullan, 2016).

Evaluation & Continuous Improvement: Evaluating the effectiveness of the change initiative is important to gauge progress and identify areas for improvement. Collecting feedback, analyzing data, and making adjustments based on the findings ensure that the change efforts align with the desired outcomes (Bryson, 2018).

Change initiatives in Higher education institutions

There are ongoing change initiatives in Ethiopian public universities aimed at addressing various challenges and improving their performance. Here are some examples of current change initiatives in Ethiopian public universities:

Digital transformation: Many Ethiopian public universities are currently undergoing digital transformation initiatives aimed at modernizing their systems and processes. This includes digitizing administrative processes, establishing online learning platforms, and upgrading their ICT infrastructure to support distance education (Altbach et al., 2019; Shashi Kant et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the advent of COVID-19 government announced the emergency situation in April, 2020. The shocks of these transformations were experienced in strategy making and substitutes of physical communication with digital contacts (Blankenberger B. & Williams A., 2020). Though public universities faced challenges in continuation of teaching and learning with helps of classroom learning methods. Therefore Government set up a national task force to find the proactive solution. Among these solutions one was strategic alternative of digital platform in learning (Chala W.D., et al., 2021).

Curriculum reform: Several Ethiopian public universities are currently working on curriculum reform to align their programs with the needs of the job market and to improve the quality of education. However, studies show that the forces, triggering curriculum reform are mostly external providing little room for internal factors and the development of curriculum from within the institution. The prevailing reform applied a government’s controlled, centralized, and a one-size-fits-all model (Tefera Tadesse & Wudu Melese, 2016; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).

Quality assurance: Quality assurance remains a key focus area for Ethiopian public universities, with many universities working on improving their quality assurance systems and processes. However, studies indicated that there are appropriate policies and structural establishments whereas leadership, resources, and information and communication are inadequate (Rediat T., 2015). The same researcher depicted that the status of capacity building, core values and rewarding quality has been low. And also the author revealed that the institutional quality enhancement of the public university vacillated between the experiential and early expansion phases of institutionalization (Rediat T., 2015; Altbach et al., 2019).

Research and innovation: Many Ethiopian public universities are currently focusing on building research and innovation capacity to promote economic development and address societal challenges. Scholars confirmed that the challenges in which the leadership in public universities of Ethiopia are failed to manage...
change and innovation effectively (Kedir & Geleta, 2017)

**Governance and management**: Governance and management is another area where Ethiopian public universities have implemented change initiatives. On top of this, the capacity to plan, manage and monitor the education system demands knowledge and skill in collecting, processing, analyzing and managing educational information at all levels of the system. However, weak capacities in strategic planning and management, policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation hamper the education system. The leadership capacity is generally weak, limited managerial capacities of educational authorities at the regional, woreda and school levels. Similarly, the HE system has also leadership challenges. The higher education leadership and management overwhelmed by routine tasks rather than focusing on strategizing universities core mission (FDRE, 2018).

**Link between Leadership behaviour & organizational change**

As Gill (2002) argues that change ‘requires convincing leadership to be effectively presented and sustained’ (p.307). Combining an understanding and interpretation of vision, values and technique coupled with motivation is disputed by Gill (2002) to advance a more sustainable change approach within the organization. Besides, Terry et al. (2001) contended that, it is true that an organizational change may make work imperfection to a person’s self-esteem. Hence, the multitalented leader’s first step in dealing with change focuses on understanding its impact on people. Further, the main assignment of leaders today is the leadership of organizational change. As said earlier, the proves from different studies propose that leadership is highly related with organizational change, fundamentally through the processes of articulating a vision, and to a lesser extent through the setting of high performance desires and giving individual support to workers. For the purpose of this study five dimensions of leadership behaviors both classical leadership behaviour (Autocratic, democratic and Laissez Faire) and one of the emerging leadership behaviors- (The Transformational and Transactional leadership behaviours) with the organizational change management in higher education institution setting were crafted. The relationship between these leadership dimensions and organizational change management discussed hereafter;

**Transformational leadership behaviour and organisational change management**

Transformational leadership stresses all interaction between leaders and followers by inspiring individuals to achieve shared objectives, pushing them to improve their working practices, and supporting them via mentoring and coaching. Besides, transformational leadership has specific characteristics that set it apart from other types of leadership behaviours. These characteristics are individualized consideration which offering personal interest, coaching and counseling; the second character is inspirational motivation which is using symbols to direct efforts and express important goals with simple method; the third feature is intellectual stimulation which supports the resolution of problems in intelligent, rational, and careful manner; the final and the forth quality of this leadership behaviour is charisma which is determination of mission, vision and culture, taking pride, gaining respect and confidence(Bass & Riggio, 2006).

**Transactional leadership behavior and Organizational Change Management**

According to Academics, organizational change tries to bring about certain noticeable changes in the organization. Due to the subjective nature of success, past academics would examine the many perspectives on specific change projects to determine if an organizational change had been successful. It was hotly discussed that an effective organizational change will improve organizational performance, while other researchers viewed successful change is as a result of cooperative individuals and their attitudes toward change (de Witte & der Voet, 2013).

Besides, several academics noted that transactional leadership is a model based on mutual exchange. In this type of exchange, the followers are awarded with a prize when they fulfill their duties and face a punishment when they do not. The leader uses organizational resources to ensure his/her followers are obedient and willing to work (Grundstein, 1999).

**Democratic leadership behaviour & organizational change management**
According to Foels et al., (2000) democratic leadership behaviour is positively aligned to change practices within the organizations. Besides, the authors argued that democratic leadership has the potential to enhance the satisfaction of employees during change. It achieves this through encouraging employee participation, which Kotter (2012) claims facilitate a more sustainable approach to change by reducing negative kinds of employee resistance. This type of leadership is the most successful when aligned to gradualist, evolutionary forms of change within the organization. It also provide everyone the opportunity to participate, and can encourage deliberate and planned change.

**Autocratic leadership behaviour and organizational change management**

As Gersick (1991) suggested that autocratic leadership behavior of change may be appropriate for those institutions having to make a dramatic, time pressurized change under a punctuated equilibrium approach. The speedy decision making processes association with this type of leadership would hasten the change process and would enable one individual to take control of the change to ensure a consistent approach. However, it is well known noted that while some aspects of autocratic leadership may be desirable in terms of pushed change. This idea shows that autocratic leadership behaviour has both positive and negative association with change management. On the other hand, scholars noted that Autocratic leaders are leaders who impose a style that is distinguished by individual control over organizations decision. Because of the leaders dictate decision to the whole organization, there is little room for input for employees’ involvement in autocratic leadership behaviour (Van Vugt, et al., 2004).

**Laissez-faire leadership Behavior and organizational change management**

Laissez-faire leadership is the lack of leadership or absence of leadership and is, by definition, most passive and ineffectual (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Besides, Bass and Riggio (2006) noted that laissez-faire leadership behavior represents a non-transaction in which required decision makings are not taken, actions are postponed, leadership duties are disregarded, and power is not exercised. This may have an impact on organizational change management. This leadership behavior was appropriate in change management like higher education’s institutions where employees were expertise.

**Review of empirical studies**

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management in public universities of Ethiopia. The following research questions guide this review: What leadership behaviour affects the success of organizational change management process in the public university? How do you perceive the relationship between leadership behaviour and organizational change are interconnected in public universities? Is it a positive or a negative relationship? To seek insights for these questions studies published from 2020 to 2023, relevance to the research objectives, studies employed qualitative, quantitative and mixed research design and contextually public universities in Ethiopia were reviewed. Accordingly the following studies are assessed.

Befekadu Zeleke carried out study on “the link between perceived leadership styles and institutional Readiness for Change in the public universities of Ethiopia in order to examine the links between leadership styles and institutional readiness for change as perceived by academic staff. A correlation research design was employed for the study. There were 616 academic staffs selected from five public universities of Ethiopia by using proportional stratified and simple random sampling technique. The data for the study were collected by using multi- factor Leadership Questionnaire and Organizational change Recipients Beliefs scale and analyzed by employing descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that transformational leadership style had high, positive, and significant relations with institutional readiness for change while transactional and Laissez- faire leadership styles had low, sometimes negative, and non- significant effects. The study concluded that high institutional readiness for change is an opportunity for university transformation (Befekadu, 2021).

Yehualashet Getahun conducted research on “Effective change management for sustainable development
in Higher education institutions with the purpose to scrutinize the prevailing platform wherein change management is exercised in Ethiopia Higher education in an attempt to implement change programs with their long-term consequences in mind. The study employed qualitative research approach based on an extensive review of relevant literature is used to draw conclusions and recommendations. The findings of the study indicated that organizational learning should take place within the wide institutional context of inter-organizational relationships and an organizations acquisition of understanding know-how, techniques and practices of any kind of change and by any means need to be stimulated. Conclusively, the paper stresses that effective leadership is the key to success of every organization, for Ethiopian higher education institutions to achieve sustainable development, the senior management of the institutions have greater role to play (Yehualashet, 2020).

From this empirical review, the researcher informed that theoretical frameworks of the studies were focus on only emerging leadership theories which indicates that theoretical framework of combining classical and modern leadership theories of five dimension leadership behaviors were less represented in literature. Besides, the author learned that the studies employed only quantitative and/or qualitative research approach, which were the limitations since the issue of leadership and organizational change management was complex. The study participants were also not comprehensive in the after mentioned studies. Therefore, this study fill these gaps that leadership behavior and organizational change management was little studied in public universities in Ethiopia.

Research Methodology

Research design and approach

The design for this study is Descriptive and explanatory design with a mixed research approach, including a cross-sectional research design. This is because of a mixed research approach that combines descriptive and explanatory designs with a cross-sectional research design offers a powerful methodology for understanding complex phenomena. It allows researchers to gather a comprehensive range of data, explore relationships between variables, and provide detailed explanations for observed patterns. By leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can enhance the validity and reliability of their findings and gain a deeper understanding of the research problem at hand (Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L., 2018; Creswell, J. W., 2014).

Sampling Techniques

The Universities were selected by stratified proportional random sampling technique. It is a sampling technique used in research to ensure that the sample obtained represents different subgroups, or strata, of the population in proportion to their presence in the population. This approach involves dividing the population into mutually exclusive and exhaustive strata based on certain characteristics, and then selecting a proportional number of participants from each stratum through random sampling (Kothari, C. R., 2004; Creswell, J. W., 2014). Public university leaders (top, middle and lower level), Academic staffs, and student’s council of public universities are pools of the study. Academic staffs and Academic leaders were selected by systematic random sampling techniques. Systematic random sampling is a systematical process where the researcher chooses the samples after specially defined interval. Purposive sampling technique was employed to choose top administrators for interview and student council for Focus Group Discussion.

Data collection instruments

In the study, the researcher employed questionnaires, interview, FGD and Document analysis as a means for collecting data. The reason for using questionnaires in the current study was to give a practical overview of the organisation change management to get ready organisation for change during the move and clarifies the focuses on key concepts that help people prepare their institutions for organizational change (ITLA, 2014). Regarding to the reasons to employed interview and FGD was to generate in-depth information through interaction with subjects on issue of local views and perceptions (Kumar, 2005).

Data analysis methods
Data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand the data that have been gathered from respondents and the appropriate analytical technique of the analysis mainly determined by the characteristics of the research design and the nature of the data gathered (Saunders M. et al., 2009). In current study, quantitative data (questionnaire) was analyzed by descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Correlation: Pearson’s correlation, independent t-test statistics were employed to Analysis.

Results and Discussion

This part of the study provides a detailed analysis of the descriptive statistics used to analyze the results of the study. It provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the data and the degree of association between the study variables and the results.

The present study aimed to investigate the respondent’s information, which would provide insights into their population dynamics while aligning with the research objectives.

Research Question 1: what Leadership Behaviour affects the success of organizational change management process?

Table 1. Leadership behavior affects the success of organizational change management process

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Academic staff (S) &amp; leader (L)</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Independent t-test</th>
<th>Independent t-test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leaders provide support to staffs in change management process.</td>
<td><strong>leader</strong></td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>-3.538</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>stiffs</strong></td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.050</td>
<td>-3.538</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Leaders successfully interfere in change management process.</td>
<td><strong>leader</strong></td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.962</td>
<td>-.410</td>
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<td><strong>stiffs</strong></td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>-.410</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leaders focus on mistakes from standards of change management.</td>
<td><strong>leader</strong></td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>-5.939</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>stiffs</strong></td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.042</td>
<td>-5.939</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management.</td>
<td><strong>leader</strong></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>-5.939</td>
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Leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>staffs</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.029</td>
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<td></td>
<td>leader</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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Leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs.

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Leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change.

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<td>-5.673</td>
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<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.043</td>
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Leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change.

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<td>leader</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.974</td>
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Leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management.

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<td>-6.401</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.928</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Item 1 table 2- Leaders provide support to staffs in change management process of mean and standard deviation are (3.18, 1.141) and (3.70, 0.950) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders provide support to staffs in change management process and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfy for the leaders provide support to staffs in change management process. The result by academic leaders is in line with Bass and Riggio (2006) revealed that leaders offer financial rewards for productivity or deny it for lack of productivity. Besides, the same researcher recognized leaders empower followers and pay attention to their individual needs and personal development, helping followers to develop their leadership potential (Bass and Riggio, 2006). According to the result of academic staff leaders are not effectively provide support to staffs in change management process.
in public universities of Ethiopia, which means it is opposite to academic leaders’ response. From this one can understand that there is problem of leaders in providing support to staffs in change management process.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the Leaders provide support to staffs in change management process \((t = -4.085, p = 0.000)\) which is p-value less than significance level \((0.05)\). This shows that significant differences between of academic staff and academic leader in Leaders provide support to staffs in change management process.

Item 2 table 2 Leaders successfully interfere in change management process of mean and standard deviation are \((3.08, 1.050)\) and \((3.50, 0.962)\) of academic staffs and academic leaders respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case explained for the leaders successfully interfere in change management process and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case portrayed and considered as satisfy for the leaders successfully interfere in change management process. The results of Academic staffs suggest that there is limitation of leaders successful interfere in change management. This in opposite to the finding of Robert & Vandenberghe (2021) revealed that the roles of Leader Member Exchange and successful leadership interfer in change management is critical. This finding emphasizes that the need for leaders successful communication of employees in the change process to overcome the barriers.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders successful interfere in change management process \((t = -3.5.8, p = 0.000)\) which is p-value less than significance level \((0.05)\). This point out that significant difference between of academic staff and academic leader in leaders successfully interferes in change management process.

Item 3 table 2 leaders focus on mistakes from standards of change management of mean and standard deviation are \((3.03, 1.023)\) and \((3.09, 1.119)\) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of both academic staff and academic leader respondents consider that are uncertain with the case illustrated for the leaders focus on mistakes from standards of change management.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders focus on mistakes from standards of change management \((t = -0.410, p = 0.682)\) which is p-value greater than significance level \((0.05)\). This designates that insignificant difference between of academic staff and academic leader in leaders focus on mistakes from standards of change management.

Item 4 table 2 leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management of mean and standard deviation are \((3.04, 1.042)\) and \((3.75, 0.969)\) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfy for the leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management \((t = -5.939 p = 0.000)\) which is p-value less than significance level \((0.05)\). This indicates that significant differences between of academic staff and academic leader in leaders inspire the powerful implementation of change management.

Item 5 table 2 leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management of mean and standard deviation are \((2.95, 1.029)\) and \((3.57, 0.979)\) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfy for the leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management \((t = -5.187 p = 0.000)\) which is p-value less than
significance level (0.05). This signifies that significant differences between of academic staff and leader in leaders actively engaged followers in organizational change management.

Item 6 table 2 leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs of mean and standard deviation are (3.03, 1.117) and (3.59, 0.978) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfying for the leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs (t = -4.455 p= 0.000) which is p-value less than significance level (0.05). This designates that significant difference between of academic staff and leader in leaders talk about the most important values of change management with staffs.

Item 7 table 2 leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change of mean and standard deviation are (3.04, 1.099) and (3.76, 1.043) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfying for the leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change (t = -5.673 p= 0.000) which is p-value less than significance level (0.05). This shows that significant differences between of academic staff and leader in leaders seek different perspectives of the staff in solving problems of the change.

Item 8 table 2 leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change (Autocratic) of mean and standard deviation are (3.07, 1.027) and (3.62, 0.974) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfying for the leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change (t = -4.577 p= 0.000) which is p-value less than significance level (0.05). This indicates that significant differences between of academic staff and leader in leaders designate the importance of a strong sense of change.

Item 9 table 2 leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management (Transformation) of mean and standard deviation are (2.93, 0.971) and (3.66, 0.928) of academic staff and academic leader respectively. The greater parts of academic staff respondents consider that are uncertain with the case described for the leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management and the greater parts of academic leader respondents consider that are feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfying for the leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management.

The result of an independent sample t-test of academic staff and academic leader about the leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management (t = -6.401 p= 0.000) which is p-value less than significance level (0.05). This indicates that significant differences between of academic staff and leader in leaders act in ways that builds common sense in change management.

Regression analysis

Table -2 Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Durbin watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12
Predictors: (Constant), Transactional leadership, Democratic leadership, Autocratic leadership, Laissez-faire leadership, Transformational leadership

Dependent variable: organizational change management

Source: SPSS output (2023)

As shown on the above table, R is the degree of association between leadership behavior and organizational change management. On the model summary the value of R, $R^2$ and Adjusted $R^2$ were .690, .476 & .476 respectively. The results of multiple regression analysis, as presented on the above table, model summary revealed that the $R^2$ of .476 indicates that 47.6% of the variation can be predicted in Organizational change management by all leadership behaviors or Independent variables. This implies that organizational change management in combination influenced by 47.6 % by all five variables in public universities in Ethiopia, the remaining 52.4% of the variation in the status of the effect of leadership behavior on organizational change management is due to other factors not included in the model and the error term (unexplained variables). This result can be related to existing literature that emphasizes the importance of multiple determinants, such as leadership styles, organizational culture, employee engagement, and external environmental factors in driving successful change management (Baesu & Bejinaru 2013, p.147)

Research Question 2 How do you perceive the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management?

Table 3. The relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic leadership</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic leadership</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire leadership</td>
<td>.354</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership</td>
<td>-.171</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>-.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional leadership</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS output (2023)

As it is stated in earlier, this study intended to investigate the most contributing independent variables in prediction of the organizational change management. Hence, the coefficient explains the average amount of change in dependent variable that is caused by a unit of change in the independent variable. Accordingly, standardized beta coefficients ($\beta$) tell us the unique contribution of each factors in the model. A high beta value ($\beta$) and a small p-value ($p < 0.05$) indicate the predictor variable has made a statistically significant contribution to the model. On the other hand, a small beta value ($\beta$) and a high $p$-value ($p > 0.05$) indicates the predictor variable has little or no significant contribution to the model(George & Mallery, 2003).

Therefore, the above table shows that Autocratic leadership had positive and statistically significant effect to organizational change management at 95 % confidence level, a 13.2% the unique contribution, since the ($\beta$-value= 0.132, $p$-value= 0.000). The results indicate that leaders who exhibit autocratic leadership behaviors, such as the speedy decision-making processes, quick up the change process and allow one person to take charge of the change to guarantee a uniform approach are more likely to facilitate successful change management in public universities. These leaders effectively communicate the vision for change; force their staff during the change process. This finding highlights the importance of autocratic leadership in driving and sustaining organizational change in the Ethiopian higher education context. This finding substantiated
by Gersick (1991) revealed that autocratic leadership behavior of change may be appropriate for those institutions having to make a dramatic, time pressurized change under a punctuated equilibrium approach. The speedy decision making processes association with this type of leadership would hasten the change process and would enable one individual to take control of the change to ensure a consistent approach. From this we can understand that Autocratic leadership behaviors strongly related with organizational change management.

On the other hand, Democratic leadership behavior had also found to have a positive and significant relationship to organizational change management with the ($\beta$-value= 0.265, p-value= 0.000), with a 26.5% democratic leadership had the unique contribution on organizational change management in the study area. The findings reveal that leaders, who exhibit democratic leadership behaviors, such as listen to employee’s ideas and concerns thus learning how to keep the spirit of the employees high, are more likely to facilitate successful change management in public universities. These leaders effectively communicate the vision for change, promote innovation, and support their staff during the change process. This finding highlights the importance of democratic leadership in driving and sustaining organizational change in the Ethiopian higher education context. It is in line with Foels et al. (2000) revealed that democratic leadership behaviour is positively aligned to change practices within the organizations. Besides, the authors argued that democratic leadership has the potential to enhance the satisfaction of employees during change. Moreover, Northouse(2009) said that democratic leaders always try to treat its subordinates fairly and will not to be controlling rather they will listen and obtain support from all subordinates.

However, during focus group discussion and key informants interview sessions the study participants, mainly at Arsi, Wolaita Sodo, Hawassa and Arba Minch Universities were describing challenges related to leadership behavior and organizational change management in public universities in Ethiopia. Among focus group participants, a fourth year business management student at Arsi University shared poor communication towards the management of change initiatives. His response taken from focus group transcripts represents others’ thought:

In our university, there is limitation of leaders providing clear direction, allocate resources appropriately, and support employees throughout the process (Female, FGD Participant-6).

Another focus group participants and a fourth year educational planning and management department student at Wolaita Sodo University was also expressing weak communication of change initiatives. In his own words:

In our university, The leaders, leadership behavior is top-down, where decisions are made without employee input, which resulted to the resistance of change and decrease the commitment of employees in change management process” (Male, FGD Participant-4).

Furthermore, interview participants at Arsi Universities was also explaining the problem of organizational change management. One of the interview participants and an Administrative and development V/President at Arsi University felt that:

"Leadership commitment and support are crucial for the successful implementation of change initiatives. Universities with proactive and supportive leadership tend to have a higher level of implementation. When leaders actively champion the change, allocates resources, and provide guidance, it creates a conducive environment for implementation. But in reality there is limitation of effective communication of change and stakeholder engagement in change management is weak (Female, Interview Participant-1).

These finding indicates that leaders required to effectively communicate the vision for change, promote innovation, and support their staff during the change process. This it highlights the importance of democratic leadership in driving and sustaining organizational change in the Ethiopian higher education context.

Furthermore, Laissez-faire leadership had also found to have a positive and significant effect on organizational change management with the ($\beta$-value= 0.354, p-value= 0.000), which means at 35.4% Laissez-faire leadership behavior had unique contribution on organizational change management in the study area. This result is
similar to the scholars noted that the leaders exercise absolutely no control. He only provides information, materials and facilities to his subordinates. This type of leadership is employee centered and the subordinates are free to establish their own goals and chart out the course of action (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, Northouse viewed that unlike the autocratic method this style of leadership can be highly motivational as people have control over their working life (Northouse, 2009). Therefore, this finding highlights the importance of laissez Faire leadership had positive relationship in driving and sustaining organizational change in the Ethiopian public university context where there are expertise and knowledgeable staffs.

Interestingly, transformational leadership had found a negative and significant contribution on organizational change management with the ($\beta$-value= -.171, p-value= 0.000), which means at 17.1% transformational leadership corresponding to change management in the study area. The results indicate that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspiring and motivating their subordinates, providing intellectual stimulation, and displaying individualized consideration, are more likely to facilitate successful change management in public universities.

However, key informants interview participants describing that still there is communication problem of organizational change management. One of interview participant and Academic Vice President at Wolaita Sodo University was stressing limitation of academic leaders who are working on change management projects. His interview response excerpted from interview transcript shortly reflects others’ view:

In our university we are working more on Leadership behavior that have a significant impact on the organizational change management. When leaders demonstrate a clear vision for change, communicate effectively, and actively engage with employees, it tends to create a positive environment for change. Their supportive and participative approach motivates employees, fosters trust, and encourages commitment to the initiatives.” But still there is limitation on the change management in our university which resulted by lack of effective communication of change, leaders commitment and employees involvement in change management process(Male, Interview Participant-7).

Thus the finding from quantitative and qualitative data helped by intellectuals that transformational leadership has been demonstrated to enhance the quality of change and the interaction between leaders and workers in an empirical study (Carter et al., 2013). This was more supported by Pausen et al. (2013), who contend that transformational leadership encourages innovation during periods of significant change. Furthermore, other researchers noted that transformational leadership shall develop a thorough plan of change and oversee the implementation in order to best way to bring the organization for the future given its existing circumstances (Hirlak & Kara, 2018). From this one can understand that the importance of transformational leadership in driving and sustaining organizational change in the Ethiopian public university context.

At last but not least, Transactional leadership had also found to have a positive and significant effect on change management with the ($\beta$-value= 0.200, p-value= 0.000), which means at 20.00% Transactional leadership had unique contribution to change management in the study area. The results suggest that Transactional leadership behaviors such as contingent reward that promising prizes for good performances and recognition of the success; management by exception (active) that investigation of deviations from rules and standards, taking corrective measures, are more likely to facilitate successful change management in public universities. This is in line with the writers that revealed successful change is as a result of cooperative individuals and their attitudes toward change (de Witte & der Voet, 2013). This finding emphasizes the need for leaders to reward that promising prizes for good performances and recognition of the success in change management. Therefore, Transactional leadership is significantly related with change management in Ethiopian public university setting.

In general, Laissez-faire leadership behavior is the most significant independent variable which has significantly statistical contribution to organizational change management with ($\beta$-value= 0.354, p-value= 0.000) which followed by Democratic leadership behavior, Transactional leadership behavior, Transformational leadership behavior and Autocratic leadership behavior with the ($\beta$-value= 0.265, p-value= 0.000);($\beta$-value= 0.200, p-value= 0.000);($\beta$-value= -.171, p-value= 0.000) and ($\beta$-value= 0.132, p-value= 0.000) respectively.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management in public universities in Ethiopia. The findings showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between organizational change management process and the leadership behaviors of autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transactional leaders. It was found that these leadership behaviors contributed to the successful implementation of change initiatives, fostering employee engagement, and facilitating effective communication.

The study did, however, also reveal a statistically significant and adverse relationship between transformational leadership behavior and organizational change management. This suggests that the conventional understanding of transformational leadership, which is characterized by inspiring and visionary leadership, would not be entirely compatible with the specific context of organizational change in Ethiopian public universities. The fundamental reasons this finding and prospective factors that can influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the context of change management in Ethiopian public universities require more investigation.

The after mentioned findings underline the value of leadership behavior in driving and managing change within public universities in Ethiopia. By adopting appropriate leadership behaviors such as autocratic, democratic, and transactional, leaders can create an environment conducive to change, motivate employees, and effectively handle the challenges related with organizational change. It is crucial for leaders in public universities to understand and customize their leadership approaches to suit the specific needs, institutional culture, and obstacles faced by public universities.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on leadership and change management in the Ethiopian higher education context, providing valuable information for both academic staff and academic leaders. It is recommended that more research be done to examine other factors and variables that might affect the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational change management, as well as to investigate into potential mitigating factors that could enhance the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the context of change in Ethiopian public universities.

Implications of the findings

The theoretical relationship between leadership behavior & the organizational change process is supported by empirical evidence in the setting of an Ethiopian public university. However, the results have underlined the necessity to further investigate specific difficulties faced by leaders at the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy which affect organizational change management process in a fast changing environment of public universities.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations of this study include potential response biases from self-reported data, the cross-sectional nature of the study, and the focus on public universities in Ethiopia, which may limit generalizability to other contexts. However, efforts were made to mitigate these limitations through rigorous sampling techniques and data analysis methods.

Future research directions

Conducting longitudinal studies would enable researchers to track changes in leadership roles in change management over an extended period, offering insights into the sustainability and long-term effects of leadership behaviors and organizational change management practices. Besides, Comparing the leadership behaviors in managing organizational change across different types of universities (e.g., private) or comparing Ethiopian public universities with institutions in other public sectors would provide valuable insights into the unique factors influencing leadership behaviors in change management.

Recommendations of the study
The time for effective organizational change management is now, not when a crisis arises. Public universities should exercise an effective leadership behavior for change management and should rigorously execute it, recognize it and sustain it, not downgrade it. Furthermore, successful change leaders should be very careful about their leadership behavior and communicating change management with the stakeholders. They should see this as a critical part of their roles. When communicating, they draw attention to the reason for the change and what it focuses on.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by authors’

**References**


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