(REVIEW ARTICLE)

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Authentic leadership versus servant leadership, movement to salvage young people in Nigeria in the era of crisis: #End SARS protests & COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Background: Leadership is necessary in groups, organizations, and nations to influence, guide, lead or direct persons, individuals, teams, or entire nations. It is both an area of research and a practical skill and it is very important especially in this era of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, economic crisis around the world and ENDSARS protests in Nigeria.

Objective: This article evaluated the authentic and servant leadership styles, compared, and contrasted them, reviewed how leadership is practiced in Nigeria, looked at the movement to salvage the young people of Nigeria, the #ENDSARS protests and what leadership style Nigeria should focus on for the future to deal with these challenges. This paper examined the above listed and gave recommendations on how leadership should be practiced in Nigeria going forward as well as the necessary environment and skill needed to teach servant and authentic leadership.

Conclusions: Transformational leadership style that has features of servant leadership and is ethical is needed in the wider corridors of power in Nigeria to transform the country's fortunes. It is important that countries and organizations conduct more sensitization and training on the right leadership styles that can be used in crisis and groom leaders that can manage crisis with the most effective style and method.

Keywords: ENDSARS; Protest; Nigeria; Youth; Servant leadership; Authentic leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership is the ability of a person, a group, or an organization to influence, guide, lead or direct other persons, other individuals and other teams or entire organizations. It is both an area of research and a practical skill and it can be a contested term [1].

It can also be defined as a process that involves social influence through which an individual can get the help and support of other people towards achieving a set goal or objective [2].

It is also seen as power-relationship that is influential in which one party in the relationship can bring about actions/movement/change in the other party which are the followers [3].

2. Importance of leadership in organizations and nations

Leadership roles are important in organizations and nations. This is because of the roles that leadership plays in organizations and nations which include: implementation of vision and values, boosting of the morale of followers,

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ensuring effective communication, provision of appropriate resources needed in the organization, amidst other roles [4].

2.1. Authentic leadership

The term Authentic leadership was conceptualized by George [5] and it looks at the lasting impact of a leadership that is wrought through the creation of values and the reflection of the highest standards of morality in the personal and professional life of the leaders and the followers.

The term authentic leadership refers to the practice of higher moral leadership by people who are self-aware [6].

Northouse [3] notes that there is no universally accepted definition of authentic leadership or who an authentic leader is, and observes that there are 3 views of authentic leadership;

- Intrapersonal view that focuses on the leader and all that happens within the leader's person.
- Interpersonal view of the authentic leader that sees the authentic leadership role as a relational one that is created by the leaders in communion with their followers.
- Developmental view that sees authentic leadership as a one that can be groomed in a person and not as a fixed trait.

Leaders who are authentic are consistent in their ethics and ethical values and their personal behaviors and this is in line with the morality exhibited by their followers. Authentic leaders are self-aware and have a positive mindset that has priority for traits such as hope, self-resilience and have optimism for the performance of the followers in a sustainable manner [7].

Luthans and Avolio [8] refer to authentic leadership as the lens of social exchange that allows one to see sharing in a mutual manner, resources of value to create trust and social power by means of repeated interactions that are a form of influence. This leads to self-reflection in the lives of authentic leaders which in turn serves as inspiration to the followers to accept the leadership role of the leaders, both in the personal and organizational life of the followers.

Authentic leadership hence creates a safe environment, which is brought on by balanced processing, accountability, rational transparency, and self-awareness hence leading to high quality connections [9].

2.2. Servant leadership

The concept of servant leadership is one that is timeless, however the phrase "servant leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in The Servant as Leader, an essay that he first published in 1970. Greenleaf [10] stressed that there were useful and important social benefits from serving and caring for other people.

Servant leadership notions have been popular in many cultures and religions especially in the Christian theology that eulogizes the state of the servant and serving. It is linked to caring for other people by realizing and discovering the internal feelings of other people, their needs and using that as foci point to take care of them or serve them [11]. The servant leader is one who devotes time to nurturing the growth and well-being of the followers. The servant leader is willing to share power and place the needs of the followers before his/hers. This is unlike traditional leadership models that has the leader at the top and served by other people [12].

Greenleaf leadership model of servant leadership is regarded as transformational by many scholars as evidenced in scholarly contributions supporting this form of transformational leadership which is useful to organizational outcomes [12]. Spears [13] further described and modified the concept of servant leadership to apply to scenarios, as well as formal organizations, and hence the concept of servant leadership is applicable in every segment of society be it education or economic leadership including formal organizations. Servant leaders are not restricted to only the care of other people, but also put the need of the followership first via cultural leadership, social justice, stewardship, humble communications, accountability, the empowerment of other people and organizations etc [14; 15; 16; 17]. Servant leadership is now accepted to be applicable to many areas of human endeavor [12].

The table below summarizes the differences between authentic leadership and servant leadership.

3. Comparison and contrast between authentic leadership and servant leadership

In servant leadership, the leaders serve the followers through helping the followership achieve the shared objectives of the company. Both authentic leadership and servant leadership stand for the right values and ethics as both have positive leadership notions [18].

Table 1 Differences between authentic leadership and servant leadership

	Authentic leadership	**Servant leadership**
Definition	The authentic leader is one that prioritizes and lays emphasis on creating and building legitimacy in the view of the followers through nurturing honest relationships with the followers, respecting their inputs and built on ethics (George, 2003).	The servant leader focuses on service and servant first. It is a form of leadership that starts with the natural feeling of wanting to serve, a conscious choice that makes one aspire to leadership, and the main goal is to take care of other people, and this is the servant leader's topmost priority (Greenleaf, 1991).
Characteristics of the leader	Authentic leadership evolved due to the need of society for genuine, trustworthy, and good leaders. The authentic leader is trustworthy, honest, ethical, self-aware, has internal moral reasoning and is transparent (Northouse, 2018)	The servant leader has the capacity to listen and show empathy. The servant leader can nurture relationships, is persuasive, has capability to conceptualise ideas relating to how to serve the followers. The servant leader has foresight and is committed to development of the human and material resources of the followers (Greenleaf, 1970)
Difference in application	The authentic leader is not as responsive as the servant leader to the desires of the followers; hence the authentic leader doesn't go overboard in the quest to meet the desires of the followers. This is to prevent the organisational goals suffering at the expense of the fulfilment of individual goals due to competing interests. The authentic leader is not encumbered when trying to make difficult decisions as there is no fear of offending anyone (Spears, 2010).	The servant leader gives priority to the needs of others: the followers and not of self. The interest of the followers supersedes that of the leader. The leader has the task of fulfilling the needs, aspirations, and the desires of the followers (Spears, 2010).
Differences in style	Unlike the servant leader, the authentic leader is more proactive and can adapt leadership to fit the circumstances or prevailing situations. The authentic leader can be inspiring and motivating but can also be tough and decisive depending on the situation, while still providing ethical leadership. Authentic leaders foster innovation better and aid their organizations to be unique and creative in finding solutions to problems (Avolio et al., 2004).	The servant leader has a one-dimensional approach of leadership which doesn't change irrespective of the situation. It involves listening, persuasion and empathy in good times and times of crisis (Spears, 2010).
Differences in approach	The authentic leader strives to be 'real'. In authentic leadership, there is no fixed character or unique style that the leader is to emulate to be recognised as an authentic leader. Each leader has peculiar style which is developed via study, experience and consultations, self-reflection and introspection. The style exhibited by the leader is consistent with the leader's personality and character (George, 2008).	The servant leader strives to be 'right'. It is a form of leadership that is normative, and all the leaders aspire to emulate these attributes and hence shape their character and personality based on the expected characteristics.

3.1. Similarities between authentic leadership and servant leadership

The authentic leader and the servant leaders do have common attributes irrespective of their differences:

- They have genuine interest in the service of others and seek to empower their followership.
- They place high premium on values and morals and have compassion and passion for their followers.
- They do not compromise on principles.
- They have a priority to establish relationships with those they lead and people.
- They sometimes rely on their personal charisma to achieve tasks in the organizations that they lead.
- They possess a personal conviction which propels them to leadership. Their leadership desires are not due to achieving a status or to gain a reward.
- They seek to work on the strengths of the followership rather than amplifying the weaknesses.

3.2. ENDSARS protest in Nigeria

The ENDSARS campaign started on Twitter in December 2017 that aimed to protest the harassment and the fatal brutality that many Nigerian youths had suffered at the hands of the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian police force [19].

The SARS unit was established under the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID) of the Nigerian Police force to combat violent crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, armed killings etc but the force had been accused of targeting Nigerian youth population and engaging in extra-judicial killings, and crimes that they were supposed to counter [19].

The outrage generated by the activities of the SARS unit led to online protests on twitter with the hashtag 'ENDSARS' which quickly translated to street protests [20].

The ENDSARS online and offline protests escalated in 2020, and by 8 October 2020 the youth formed the bulk of the protesters. Initially the protesters wanted the government to abolish the SARS unit that was accused of criminality and illegality in the manner that they had conducted their affairs over the years, and the youths bemoaned their unfair profiling over the years by the different SAR units in police formations across Nigeria [19].

The protest began with no identifiable leadership/ central leadership due to unleashing of bottled-up anger by the youths against police brutality as well as economic hardship and underdevelopment of the country and quickly spread across major cities and towns in Nigeria [19]. The Nigerian army reportedly attacked the protesters and killed some at the Lekki Tollgate subsequently known as the Lekki Tollgate Massacre, and subsequently a panel of inquiry instituted by the government of the local area determined that the incident could be equated as a massacre, burying the claims by the military authorities that they had fired only blanks at the protesters [21].

3.3. Long term benefit and challenges of the movement to salvage young people in Nigeria

The long-term benefit of these protests despite that they were cut short following the Lekki tollgate massacre include that the protests were able to highlight the plight and neglect of the youth population of Nigeria. The youths were able to present the 7 point demands to the government to address the issues causing the protests and these centred on welfare and good governance. Despite incidences of jail breaks, and protests turning violent with accusation of infiltration of the protests by enemies of the state and nefarious elements sponsored by opposition politicians, it has reawakened a sense of civic responsibility and awareness among the youth of Nigeria with multiple groups protesting for better conditions in the respective regions of Nigeria [19].

The movement to save the youths of Nigeria as represented in the ENDSARS movement and protests had also brought about the disbandment of the SARS formation all over Nigeria and brings an opportunity for true police reforms. The political awakening of the youth especially pre-election had caused large numbers of the youth to register to vote, which has potential to redraw the electoral map of Nigeria considering that most voters in Nigeria are youths [19].

Many of the hurdles and challenges faced by the youth pre-ENDSARS protests still exist and may have gotten worse, such as the economic challenges that Nigeria faces, and hence leadership is needed to address the causes of the protests. The government still needs to address the points raised by the youths in the 7-point demands given by the youths to the government during the protests [19].

4. COVID-19 and economic challenges in Nigeria

Within the same period that the ENDSARS protests were happening in Nigeria, the country was also grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic fallout from the event.

The economic downturn in Nigeria was set off by a combination of declining oil prices and COVID-19 effects due to local and international disruptions to trade and travel. Despite the monetary measures taken by the authorities in Nigeria to cushion the effect of this crisis, the pandemic disrupted economic activity in Nigeria, worsening unemployment and restiveness hence amplifying the societal and economic crisis of the country [22].

4.1. How leadership is exhibited in Nigeria

Nweke [23] notes that the Nigerian leadership as exhibited by the Nigerian ruling class has been self-centred, with negative attitudes towards development and good governance, and lack of critical thinking by the leaders, hence poor governance, weak economic management, and erosion of public trust in political leaders and the political system of Nigeria.

Ejimabo [24] noted that because of many years of bad governance and neglect of the welfare of the populace, many political leaders in Nigeria find it difficult to win the trust of the population. Nwokike [25] observed that selfish desires of the political leaders in Nigeria to wield powers and have the instruments of state at their disposal, has led to corruption, leaders recycling themselves instead of giving way to younger people with better ideas on how to run the economy and the country, hence leading to underdevelopment of the country, mass illiteracy, and poor political education.

4.2. Leadership that Nigeria should focus on going forward and how the leaders can re-engineer the future of the country

Dakuku [26] notes that for Nigeria to emerge from the crisis of leadership that it currently suffers from, there must be a conscious effort to enthrone leadership that is visionary and transformational. This is the leadership that Nigeria should focus on. This transformational leadership should be responsive, responsible, and authentic. The leadership should be led by people with good character, competence, accountability, and leadership skills. This would be the catalyst to set Nigeria on the right path of development. These leaders with the qualities mentioned earlier, can then re-orient the populace via personal conduct and ensuring organizational change by means of enforcement of the rule of law and disallowing impunity [26].

4.3. Leadership style that would be suitable to address these challenges in a time when trust is vital in Nigeria and genuinely care for the people

According to Dakuku [26], the transformational leadership style that has features of servant leadership and is ethical is needed in the wider corridors of power in Nigeria to transform the country's fortunes. Such a leadership is important as it is visionary and able to take care of the needs of the people and would be able to genuinely care for the people.

4.4. Can authentic and servant leadership be taught?

The task of teaching leadership that is socially responsible is the responsibility of contemporary leadership educators [27]. Some scholars make the argument that servant & authentic leadership and other forms of leadership can be taught, the way other abstract topics in leadership can be taught to people, but this can only be learned through deep discussions and practice with the learners. Reflection and discussion must be used in these discussions, and it is helpful when the educators use illustrative examples that can help the students to create a personal, internal connection with the leadership model that is taught [28].

Authentic leadership can be learned by people who are interested in becoming authentic leaders through consistent and persistent work to develop in five dimensions of authentic leadership such as development in purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and the heart as well as the requisite characteristics in behaviour that is required to become an authentic leader [29; 30].

Recommendation

- Both authentic and servant leadership has desirable qualities of leadership which would nurture and grow organisations and societies to become successful and prosperous.
- In the case of Nigeria, the youth population have been awakened to the need for reforms and sustainable positive changes to turn the fortunes of the country and its people around.
- The leadership that Nigeria should focus on should be one that has features of servant leadership, authentic leadership and should be transformational and visionary to change the fortunes of the country and the people.
- Both authentic leadership and servant leadership can be learned and need to be taught to groom the youths and next generation in the right values and conduct of leadership.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the definitions of authentic and servant leadership, their importance, similarities, and differences and how leadership is exhibited in Nigeria.

The '#ENDSARS' protest and root causes have been examined, including the root causes and other crisis that Nigeria faces including the challenges ahead facing the provision of the right leadership for Nigeria that would unlock the potentials of the country.

The need for leaders to be grounded in morals, exhibit transparency, and responsibility and be authentic is more pronounced in time of crisis such as the one that Nigeria faces in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic crisis and crisis arising from the ENDSARS protests.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declare no competing interest.

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