

# Bio-Social Variables as Predictors of Teacher Union Leaders' Adherence to Democratic Principles in Ogun State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study investigated the influence of bio-social variables - educational status, age and family socio-economic background on teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria. The study employed the ex-post-facto research design. Five hypotheses were generated and tested using an instrument titled "union leadership adherence to democratic principles scale" (ULADPS) which comprised 15 items based on the research hypotheses and was structured on a four points Likert scale for data collection. The instrument was administered to a purposely selected population of 200 members of the unions. Data generated were analyzed using Linear Regression Analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression Analysis to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings show that bio-social variables - educational status, age and family socio-economic background jointly contributed to teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles with an F-value of  $F(3, 196) = 3075.047$ . The relative predictions of the variables were as follows: educational status ( $\beta = .444$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); age ( $\beta = .616$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) and family socio-economic background ( $\beta = .400$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). It is therefore recommended based on the findings of the study that union leaders should have higher educational qualifications and that matured teachers should lead teacher unions as these will engender willingness to follow democratic principles

**Keywords:** Educational status, Age, Family, Socio-economic background, Teacher unions, Democratic principles, Ogun East, Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

Constitutions of teachers' union in Nigeria clearly demonstrate the laid down democratic norms and principles they are supposed to adhere to in the running and governance of their activities. However, over the years, internal crises occasioned by accusations of poor representation and non-adherence to democratic principles and practice in the older union Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) gave rise to the emergence of the younger one Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS). Succession processes are most often delayed without regard to the provision of tenures as stated in the constitutions of the unions. Leaders in the union tend to maintain their hold on members using the stick and carrot approach of management style.

Meanwhile, with the loss of political relevance in most countries of the world, monarchy and military rule have given way to democracy as the acceptable means by which people can be governed and administered. Without prejudice to the fact that most, if not all, Arab countries still practice monarchical system of government, democracy has become the beautiful bride by which countries are adjudged to be elitist and modern. Democracy is regarded as the most fashionable form of governance in all nations of the world today. The issue has shifted to democratization as the only viable option in this age of civilization. Owolabi (2003) opines that democracy has been recognized as the only moral and legitimate way through which a society can be administered. He further stresses that the democratization project is therefore regarded as the age of civilization that every society should strive to attain rather than an option for the governance of the people.

Good governance built on democratic principles must therefore be based on certain unassailable principles. Oluwole (2003) lists such principles as including – justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness and transparency in governance.

It is in this regard that trade union which is also a form of human organization is also seen as a project that must imbibe the democratic principles for it to achieve its set goals and objectives. Embedded in its definition, trade unions are of necessity should be democratic organizations. Trade Union (Amendment) Act (2005) of Nigeria defines a trade union as:

*"any combination of workers or employers whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers, whether the combination in question would or would not, apart from the act, be an unlawful combination by reason of any purpose being in restraint of trade, and whether its purpose do or do not include the provision of benefits for its workers"*.

Union leaders are representatives of the workers and selection process must be democratic and representative in nature. Any selection process that is not democratic cannot be said to be representative in principle and practice.

Unions are generally regarded as democratic bodies unlike the employer bodies. According to Flesher (2007), union must have rule books which allow members to have a vote in electing their representatives and deciding policy, members must be allowed fair representations and that the most pressing of these conditions is

accountability. Elected leaders must be accountable to the members for their actions while serving the interests of the union. It is not unusual to discover that some leaders of unions do not follow democratic principles in administering their unions.

Confirming this fear, Mersel (2006) insists that various trade union organizations and political parties have faced the problem of on nondemocratic trade unions and political parties, leading to a situation where most of these parties and unions focus only on other external activities, to the detriment of internal planning and organization. Mersel (2006) identifies challenges in adhering to democratic principles in the running of trade unions to include selection of leaders as well as candidates, policy making, membership relations, gender and the interest of the minorities among the members of the union. A union that claims to be democratic, according to Stepan-Norris and Zeithlin (1996) must combine three basic features of – (i) a democratic constitution, (ii) institutional opposition and (iii) active membership. It is pretty hard to determine whether trade unions in Nigeria, especially teachers union can satisfy these three conditions.

Alalade (2004) while working on trade union and democratic option in Nigeria came to the conclusion that trade union, albeit union leaders play an important and fundamental role in the overall development of the country. Therefore, both the government and trade unions should be seen to be partners in the development of democracy in Nigeria. Okafor and Malizu (2013) who worked on media, democracy and trade unionism in Nigeria came to the conclusion that trade union must position itself well to meet democratic challenges. This may require that the union must reorganize its own structure, paving way for increasing democratization policy and mobilization of its members for more union activities. Okojie (2011) who worked on problems of internal democracy among trade unions in Nigeria found out that union leaders are far from allowing full democratization of trade unionism thereby hindering adequate participation of union members. This researcher has tried to find out if teacher unions leaders are actually making efforts to satisfy the conditions mentioned above and also find out if bio-social variables are intervening in the realization of such objectives.

## **2. Emergence of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS)**

Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) which happened to be one of the earliest trade unions in Nigeria was founded in July 1931 by the amalgamation of the first two teachers Associations in Nigeria, namely, Lagos Union of Teachers (LUT), which was founded in 1925 under Rev. Canon (later Venerable) J. O. Lucas and the Association of Headmasters of Ijebu Schools (AHIS), which was also founded by Rev. I.O. Ransome Kuti 1926. Rev. Israel Oladotun Ransome Kuti later emerged as the first National President of the Union while Venerable J.O. Lucas became its first National Vice President

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) became widespread in the Western and Eastern regions with branches in some Northern towns. This followership gain from the from the Northern part of the country paved the way for the formation of Northern Teachers Association (NTA) in March 1948 under the leadership of Alhaji Aminu Kano and became registered as a Trade Union on 31st March, 1951

When Nigeria was administratively adjusted to 12 States in 1966 by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon, the structure of the NUT was also re-adjusted to reflect the new state structure and this effectively replaced the former regional structure with the sole aim of achieving a truly national status for Teachers Union in Nigeria.

Today, NUT has thirty six (36) State Wings and FCT Abuja Wing, spread across seven hundred and seventy four (774) Local Government Areas all over the country

On the other hand, Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS) was established as a reaction several alleged undemocratic practices by the leaders of NUT in the country. Its origin could be traced to 1996 with the formation of Association of Secondary School Teachers (ASSOEST) when agitation for fair representations on the part of secondary school teachers became loud. ASSOEST remained a pressure group within the NUT until early 2000 when some members took the bull by the horns by forming what is now known as ASUSS and consequently started the process of its registration as a trade union with the Registrar of Trade Unions. They have consistently accused their primary school counterparts as leading them by the nose all along. Among the complaints are: underrepresentation at various level, non-adherence to democratic principles and practice coupled with the inability of NUT to provide good leadership that will engender sound and rapid educational development of the country.

It is pertinent to note that primary school teachers constituted the bulk of membership of NUT for decades. This is not unconnected with the fact that the country has more primary schools and teachers than secondary schools. In any case, a blind game of number without any machinery for fair representation will always give advantage to the primary school teachers over their counterparts in NUT.

While justifying the insistence of ASUSS to seek a better union to achieve the aims and objectives of secondary school teachers, Folarin (2013) said:

*“we have an undying conviction that going back to NUT is not a viable replacement for our welfare to be*

*guaranteed. The placement of square peg in a round hole does not drive monumental development. Grouping secondary school teachers with primary school teachers as one union is no more fashionable. It is retrogressive and therefore represents perversion of system”.*

Meanwhile, not all secondary school teachers are members of ASUSS. Though, they are obviously in the minority, some who believe that NUT can meet their demands and aspirations remained in NUT till date.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that the two major teacher unions registered in Nigeria – Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS) industrial unions with large numbers of followers in the country. Members of the unions are in all the 774 local governments in Nigeria. The services they render are very important in the efforts for the overall development of the country and these make them important actors in the industrial relations system in Nigeria. They also have a major role to play in the socialization process of the younger generation and preparing them for adulthood where they are expected to become leaders. Meanwhile, these two unions are registered with the Registrar of Trade Unions in Nigeria with each of them having their constitutions in place. These constitutions clearly demonstrate the laid down democratic norms and principles they are supposed to adhere to in the running and governance of their activities. However, over the years, internal crises occasioned by accusations of poor representation and non-adherence to democratic principles and practice in the older union (NUT) gave rise to the emergence of the younger one (ASUSS). Succession processes are most often delayed without regard for the provision of tenures as stated in the constitutions of the unions. Leaders tend to maintain their hold on the members whom they control through the use of stick and carrot approach to union management.

It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the influence of educational status, age and family socio-economic background on leaders of teachers' union adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

This study has the following as its objectives:

- (i) To determine the influence of educational status of teachers union leaders on their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria.
- (ii) To determine the influence of age of teachers union leaders on their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria.
- (iii) To determine the influence of family socio-economic background of teachers union leaders on their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria.
- (iv) To determine the joint impact of educational status, age, and family socio-economic background on teacher unions leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria
- (v) To determine the relative impact of educational status, age, and family socio-economic background on teacher unions leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria.

### 5. Research Hypotheses

The following are the research hypotheses that guided this study.

**Ho1:** Educational status of teacher union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

**Ho2:** Age of teacher union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

**Ho3:** Family socio-economic background of teacher union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

**Ho4:** Educational status, age, and family socio-economic background will not jointly determine teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

**Ho5:** Educational status, age, and family socio-economic background will not relatively determine teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

### 6. Materials and Methods

The study employed the ex-post-facto research design. The population for this study comprised all members of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS) in Ogun East Senatorial District. A sample of 200 members comprising of 100 from each of the unions were randomly selected. Five hypotheses were generated and tested using an instrument titled “union leadership adherence to democratic principles scale” (ULADPS) which comprised of 15 items based on the research hypotheses and was structured on a four points Likert scale. The instrument was administered to a purposely selected population of

200 members of the unions with a return rate of 100 percent because all the questionnaires were adequately monitored with personal touch of the researcher. Data generated were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Regression Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis to test the five hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

### 7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The result of the analysis that guided this study is thus presented below. Each of the table represented the outcome of the study in line with the formulated research hypotheses.

#### Results

##### Hypothesis One:

Educational status of teachers union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State.

Table 1: Linear Regression analysis showing the influence of educational status, on teachers union leaders adherence to democratic principles

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	Sig.
(Constant)	21.65	1.891	-	11.453	<0.05
Educational Status	1.582	0.136	.638	11.657	<0.05

R<sup>2</sup> 0.979  
 Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> 0.979  
 F=Statistics 3075

The results in table 1 revealed a significant outcome (R<sup>2</sup>=0.407, P<0.05). This showed that education alone as the independent variable accounted for about 41% of the total variation in determining teachers' union leaders adherence to democratic principles and practice in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 135.88 with correspondence p-value of (0.000) indicate statistically that the model is highly significant Thus Educational status of teachers will determine teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

##### Hypothesis Two

Age of teachers' union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

Table 2: Linear Regression analysis showing the influence of age on teacher unions leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	$\beta$	T	Sig.
Constant	21.65	1.003	-	24.24	<0.05
Age	1.304	0.067	.810	19.46	<0.05

R<sup>2</sup> 0.657  
 Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> 0.655  
 F=Statistics 378.93

The result in table 2 revealed a significant outcome (R<sup>2</sup>=0.657, P<0.05). This showed that age of teachers as the only independent variable accounted for about 66% of the total variation in teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 378.93 with correspondence p-value of (0.00) indicated statistically that the model is highly significant. Thus age of teachers will significantly determine union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

##### Hypothesis Three

Family socio-economic background of teachers' union leaders will not influence their adherence to democratic principles and practice in Ogun State.

Table 3: Linear Regression analysis showing the influence of socio-economic status on teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	Sig
(Constant)	20.795	2.153	-	9.660	<0.05
Socio-economic background	1.518	0.143	.603	10.627	<0.05

R<sup>2</sup> 0.363  
 Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> 0.360  
 F=Statistics 112.941

The result in the 3 revealed a significant outcome (R<sup>2</sup>=0.363, P <0.05). This showed that teachers' socio economic background as the only independent variable accounted for about 36% of the totals variation in teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 112.941 with correspondence p-value of (0.00) indicate statistically that the model is highly significant Thus, family socio-economic background will significantly determine teachers' union leaders adherence to democratic principles in

Ogun State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

**Hypothesis Four**

Educational status, age and family socio-economic background will not jointly determine teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State.

Table 4a: Composite effect of bio-social variables of educational status, age and family socio-economic background on teachers' union leaders adherence to democratic principles

Multiple Correlation (R)	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
.990	.979	.797	.61900	3075.047	<0.05

\*Significant at P<0.05

Table 4b: ANOVA test on the joint impact of bio-social variables of educational status, age and family socio-economic background on teachers union leaders adherence to democratic principles

Variables	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	3534.720	3	1178.240	3075.047	<0.05
Residual	75.100	196	.383		
Total	3609.820	199			

\*Significant at P<0.05

The results shown in tables 4a and 4b depicted that significant composite impact existed. This is on account that with  $F_{(199)} = 3075.047$ , at  $P < 0.05$ , bio-social variables had joint significant impact on teachers union leaders adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State. In other words, with an F-value of pf 3075.047, it can be empirically established that bio-social factors of educational status, age and family socio-economic background had a joint impact on teacher unions leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State. This is also explained by the Adj  $R^2$  value of .797 which when multiplied by 100 shows the total percentage contribution of all independent variables to the variance of the dependent variable, that is 79.7% which is significant at  $P < 0.05$ .

**Hypothesis Five**

Educational status, age, and family socio-economic background will not relatively determine teachers' union leaders' adherence to democratic principles.

Table 5: Relative contributions of educational status, age and family socio-economic background on teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.311	0.486	-	0.640	0.523
Educational Status	1.037	.025	.444	41.810	<0.05
Age	0.981	.017	.616	58.201	<0.05
Family socio-economic background	0.964	.025	.400	37.958	<0.05

Table 5 is explained below by writing the regression equation. Linear regression is synonymous with equation of a straight line (Adesoji, 2006).

$$Y = 0.311 + 1.0X_1 + 1.0X_2 + 1.0X_3$$

Where Y = teachers union leaders adherence to democratic principles (dependent variable)

$X_1$  = Educational Status.

$X_2$  = Age.

$X_3$  = Family Socio-Economic Background

It is obvious that all the three independent variables have significant t-values. Moreover, from table 5, it is obvious that bio-social factors contributed significantly to the teachers unions adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State of Nigeria. All the biosocial factors contributed significantly to the achievement of dependent variable (adherence to democratic principles)

Given the order of hierarchical relative impact, it is evident from table 10 that educational status ( $\beta = .444$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); age ( $\beta = .616$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) and family socio-economic background ( $\beta = .400$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) all contributed significantly to the union leaders adherence to democratic principles.

**8. Discussion**

The results in table 1 revealed a significant outcome ( $R^2=0.407$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). This showed that education alone as the independent variable accounted for about 41% of the total variation in determining teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles and practice in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 135.88 with correspondence p-value of (0.000) indicate statistically that the model is highly significant Thus Educational status of teachers will determine union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. The findings of this study revealed that majority of teachers (including those that are leading the unions) have

just the minimum teaching qualification of National Certificate in Education (NCE). Activities relating to unionism are most likely to hamper educational advancement of these crops of union leaders as they will be quite busy with the running of the union more often than engaging in further studies. Most of these leaders see unionism as a sort career development where they hope to lead the union at state or at national level someday.

In addition, the result in table 2 revealed a significant outcome ( $R^2=0.657$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). This showed that age of teachers as the only independent variable accounted for about 66% of the total variation in teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 378.93 with correspondence p-value of (0.00) indicated statistically that the model is highly significant. Thus, age of teachers will significantly determine union leaders' adherence to democratic principle and practice in Ogun State. Table 2 revealed that 53.5 percent of the respondents are below 40 years of age. The plausible conclusion one can derive from this is that union leadership activities are common with the younger generation of workers. This may be connected with the fact unionism involves risk taking, unfavourable attitude of the government towards union leaders, travelling across the country attending meetings, rallies and delegate conferences which adult work force may not find fanciful enough to indulge in. This corroborates the assertion of Okafor and Malizu (2013) who reported that both military and civilian administrations in Nigeria were seen to pose serious challenges to trade union activities in the country. These administrations tend to demonstrate harsher attitude towards trade union activities.

Just like Okafor and Malizu (2013) who believe that military administration tends to be more hostile, this researcher is of the opinion that civilian administrations are also guilty of this charge. Labour leaders are often harassed and intimidated in the course of their union activities.

Table 4 further revealed a significant outcome ( $R^2=0.363$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). This showed that teacher union leaders' family socio economic background as the only independent variable accounted for about 36% of the totals variation in teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State. Also, the F-values of 112.941 with correspondence p-value of (0.00) indicate statistically that the model is highly significant. Thus, family socio-economic background will significantly determine teachers' union leaders adherence to democratic principles in Ogun State. From experience, leadership of unions is left to workers that are either from lower or middle class background. The fighting spirit that is needed to propel interest labour activism is always present in workers from lower or middle income background.

In addition to the above, tables 4a, 4b and 5 indicated that all the bio-social variables tested in this research jointly and relatively contributed significantly to teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles. Given the order of hierarchical relative impact, it is evident from table 10 that educational status ( $\beta = .444$ ;  $P<0.05$ ); age ( $\beta = .616$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) and family socio-economic background ( $\beta = .400$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) all contributed significantly to the union leaders adherence to democratic principles. In adhering to democratic principles, teachers union leaders should not only consider their low or middle socio-economic background as the only motivator in propelling them to serve thereby beclouding their sense of mission, they should be seen as exhibiting true ideals of leading by examples. Teacher union leaders should not only be seen fighting the government for adherence to democratic principles and practices but also consciously work for the institution of the same ideal in the running of their unions. These should be seen in practical way they also lead their unions.

## 9. Conclusion

The present study was carried out against the background of determining whether bio-social variables - educational status, age and family socio-economic background of teacher unions' leaders will predict their adherence to democratic principles in running their unions at various levels. The findings of this study have clearly established that those biosocial variables mentioned above have significant impact on teacher union leaders' adherence to democratic principles.

## 10. Recommendations

This study has therefore recommended that union leaders in primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria should endeavour to have higher educational qualifications which may engender their adherence to democratic principles. This will elevate them from bread and butter union leadership level as most of these union leaders could be seen from this perspective at the present moment. In addition, matured teachers should be encouraged to take active parts in the leadership of their unions as this will also engender mature leadership and willingness to adhere to democratic principles

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