

Influence of Leadership Approach on Performance of Building Construction Industries in South-East of Nigeria

K.C. Okolie & Ezenwata Chidozie Jovita

Department of Building, Faculty of Environmental science
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of leadership approach on performance of building construction industries in south-east of Nigeria. It adopted descriptive research design. One research question and hypothesis guided the study. The population for this study consisted of 2890; 945 contractors and 1945 employees from the 290 registered building construction firms handling public buildings within South-East, Nigeria. A sample size of 351; 103 contractors and 248 employees were used for the study. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. The face and content validity of the instrument was established using the opinions of three experts from the Department of Building, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. The findings of this study revealed that the adoption of democratic and transformational leadership styles will enhance the performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria. Thus, a combination of democratic and transformational leadership styles are the most appropriate leadership styles for improving organizational performance of construction industries.

It recommended among others that managers of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria should apply a combination of democratic and transformational leadership styles so as to continuously improve on their organizational performance and managers of construction industries should adopt leadership styles that are in tandem with the set goals, cultural values and organizational peculiarities of their firms as there is no one best leadership style.

KEYWORDS

building construction industries;
performance; leadership styles

INTRODUCTION

Construction sector is the backbone of a country's development and progression. The construction sector in Nigeria has become the "largest construction sector in the West Africa and remains a construction safe heaven' amid both wider political and financial turmoil (Abdul & Husnain, 2013). Ogunoh, (2014) observed that Nigerian construction industry is responsible for the delivery of building structures, such as building of all types, and engineering works. The Nigeria Construction Industry (NCI) has been described as a „*sleeping giant*“ in terms of service delivery and capacity to satisfy the needs of its clients (Kolo and Ibrahim, 2017). The construction sector is mainly divided into three types of activities in the economy: infrastructure construction, residential construction, and commercial construction which includes business complexes, shopping malls, bridges, dams, roads and urban infrastructure development.

Construction industry as an organization is a social set-up which has a boundary that separates it from its environment, pursues its own collective goals and controls its own performances (Dosunmu & Olusanya, 2011). Thus, an organization is an entity set up for a purpose. The main purpose for any going concern is to create utility. The satisfaction of customers of any enterprises results from the creation of and delivery of quality goods and services. It is important to emphasize that in any formal organization; interactions are rationally coordinated and directed through time on a continuous basis. The person at the helm of affairs is usually the leader. Thus, for an organization to perform effectively there must be holistic interactions between the leader and the employees. The construction industry is being increasingly challenged to successfully innovate in order to satisfy the aspirations and needs of society and clients and to improve its competitiveness (Ezeokoli, 2018). The Egan Report (2013) identified five key drivers of change in the construction industry; (i) committed leadership, (ii) a focus on the customer, (iii) integrated process and terms, (iv) a quality driven agenda; and (v) commitment to people. The Egan report aptly captured that leadership was one of the five key drivers of change in the construction industry. In any industry, organizations deal with issues related to management, planning, human resources, and leadership.

In this context, the role of leadership approach is a crucial factor for the advancement and prosperity of organizational growth. Leadership is often called as a specific or particular behavior shown by a manager to motivate his subordinates to achieve goals and get maximum output in aspect of work efficiency and satisfaction (Halaychik, 2016; Trivellas & Drimoussis, 2013). Leadership is critical to the overall successful performance of any enterprise, business, and it is even much more important to the construction industry due to its diverse nature. According to Toor & Ofori (2016), leadership is said to be the outcome due to the leader's self-related cognitive information, personality traits, motives, and understanding the operating situation or condition. Leadership has a significant impact on how employees perform and how they grow, leading to a positive outcome of an organization (Skeepers & Mbohwa, 2015). Leadership is a subject of great concern since a long time and how leadership evokes response from the followers is an immense aspect of it. In the corporate world, leader and the led; these two play an important role in shaping the destiny of an organization (Wu, Fang, & Li, 2015). It is much significant in success of an organization from any sector in today's competitive global market. There are various types of leadership styles identified in management literature. They include but not limited to the following:

- a) Autocratic Leadership Style
- b) Democratic Leadership Style
- c) Transformational Leadership Style
- d) Transactional Leadership Style

Autocratic leadership is also referred to as authoritarian style of leadership. This is the type of leadership style where the focus of power is with the manager and all interaction within the group move towards the manager (Uchenwamgbe, 2013). In this case, the manager alone exercises decision-making and authority for determining policy, procedures for achieving goals, work tasks and relationships, control of rewards or punishments. In contrast to this style of leadership, democratic leadership is the opposite of authoritarian leadership style. It involves the engaging of group members in the decision making and working in tandem with them. Leaders using this style confer final authority on the group; decisions are not solely made by the leader. This style is suitable for personnel who appreciate getting involved in decision-making in an organization. It is advantageous because it meets one of the Maslow's hierarchies of needs of employees as it boosts self-esteem (Adogbo, 2017). Transformational leadership is all about initiating change in organizations, groups, oneself and others. Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible. They set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performance.

Transformational leadership on the other hand is much more concentrated on that of a leader's personal attributes, values and belief system rather than transactional relationship between the leader and follower. These leaders can inspire and lead changes in an organisation's visions, policies and affairs (Liphadzi et al., 2015). They present themselves as role models for employees, motivate them, stimulate their intelligence, help raise subordinate awareness and help subordinates understand the need for change. However, in transactional leadership, the subordinates comply with the leader's request and order but with less enthusiasm for ensuring that the task objectives are actualized (Boehnke et al., 2013). Leaders in transactional leadership employ external actors' service to perform the task that the organization requires to attain its desired goals. The main objectives of a transactional leader are to guarantee that the process of the organizational goal attainment is understood clearly by the internal actors, removing potential barriers that might exist within the system and motivating the actors to achieve the set goals (House & Aditya, 2017). Stam (2015) explains that a transactional leader will carry out all the organizational tasks with the subordinates to ensure the organizational targets are met at the specified time to complete the task. The effect of leadership is vital in almost every organizational scale, from a small business to the largest corporations in the world. When leadership is weak, organizations are susceptible to losing credibility as well as profitability.

Developing countries like Nigeria according Sarbapriya and Ishita, (2014) there is a significant demand for the leadership in the construction industry, for reasons such as project planning, project performance, project management, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and efficient communication. However, leadership approach is the pattern of behaviour engaged in by leaders when dealing with employees. However, there are various leadership styles that could be adopted by managers of construction industries for the achievement of organizational goals. For the purpose of this study, emphasis would be placed on four major leadership approaches and these include; autocratic, democratic, transformational and transactional leadership styles.

The importance of a leader in an organization cannot be undermined. Uchenwamgbe (2013) stated that without leadership, an organization is but a module of men and machines. It is the human factors which bind a group together and motivate it towards goals. Therefore, the efficiency of an organization lies on the leader.

Thus, leadership approach plays an important role in shaping the behavior and attitude of the members of an organization. In recent years, the study on leadership has drawn more attention due to its role in the success or failure of an organization. Over the years, scholars and researchers have not been unanimous on the best appropriate style of leadership to adopt in an organization and this has led to the formulation of several theories on organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Scholars have argued that no particular leadership style is the best for organizational performance but the fact remains that whichever way leadership and its approach is defined, the role of leaders in ensuring effective organizational performance and commitment of workers cannot be over-emphasized. The point, therefore, is that organizational performance, workers' commitment, labour management relations and productivity are all determined by the leadership style of the manager. Saddam and Muhammad (2015) further stated that due to high tension present in contemporary organizations working environment, their rules and regulations, public dealings and politics (formal or informal), less educated employees may not be able to behave naturally, communicate openly and show their feelings. Considering that the success or failure of building construction industry in South East Nigeria, depend on the leadership approach adopted by the contractors and managers, it is essential to determine the extent leadership styles contribute to their organizational performance to ensure their sustainable growth.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership is even more vital in the construction industry where success is measured by the projects being on time and within budget. Dosunmu and Olusanya (2011) in a study on the influence of leadership and performance of small-scale industries in Lagos State reported that large number of small-scale industries spring up yearly in the State but many of them collapse as a result of leadership performance. According to Dosunmu and Olusanya, the leadership problem was manifest in poor employee motivation, lack or little involvement of employees in decision-making, inadequate attention to employees' welfare and so on which often result to high rate of employee turnover (Ejere, & Abasilim, 2015). Besides, good leadership helps any national state through times of challenges and further makes business organization to be successful. It also enables companies to fulfil their missions.

On the contrary, the absence of leadership is equally dramatic in its effects. Without leadership, organizations move too slowly, stagnate, and lose their way. Thus, it is important to understand how leaders influence behaviour, change the course and overcome resistance. Moreover, it is also necessary to understand their leadership practices for project success. Hence, the success of a construction project depends on several factors, one of which is the competencies of the project leaders, their personalities, characteristics, skills and leadership styles, amongst others. All these impacts significantly on construction project outcomes. According to Müller and Turner (2019), there is increasingly recognition that different types of projects require different methods for their management and leadership, as well as requiring management procedures tailored to meet the needs of the specific project.

It is important to note that the leader in the construction industry is responsible for the performance of the team and the achievement of their goals. Therefore, the construction leader who has good skills and leadership styles can expect good results from the team entrusted to them. Undoubtedly, similar situations can be obtainable in South East Nigeria where large numbers of construction firms operate. Hence, this present research seeks to investigate the relationship between different leadership style practices and project success in the South East construction industry as it is very important to understand the leadership styles in the construction industry and their resultant effects on project successes. This dissertation is pertinent because of its effects on the economic wellbeing of the entrepreneurs, the general public and the government particularly in South East which is one of the industrial hub in the country. The extent leadership approach affects organizational performance of these industries is not clearly known. Hence this study is imperative as it will reveal the actual situation in these building construction industries to guide objective remedial actions by the contractors and their managers.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of leadership approaches on the performance building construction industries in South East of Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks:

- (1) to determine the extent to which different leadership approaches influence the performance of building construction industries in South East of Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

- (1) To what extent do different leadership approaches influence the performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- (1) There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of contractors and employees on the extent to which leadership approaches influence performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria.

METHODS

The study adopted descriptive research design. The population for this study consisted of 2890; 945 contractors and 1945 employees from the 290 registered building construction firms handling public buildings within South-East Nigeria according to data from Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce: Anambra State, Abia State, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo State chapter. A sample size of 351; 103 contractors and 248 employees were used for the study. The sample size for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's sample reduction formula. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire titled **Leadership Styles and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (LSOPQ)**. It has sections A and B. Section A contains items on demographic data of respondents while Section B contains four clusters of B₁ to B₄ with five response options of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), moderate extent (ME), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE). The face and content validity of the instrument was established using the opinions of three experts from the Department of Building, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using a pilot test involving 20 construction contractors and employees of construction companies in South-South Nigeria which is not part of the sample for the study. which was outside the study area but have similar features to the studied area. Data collected was analysis using Cronbach alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

The researcher with the help of three research assistants administered the questionnaire and engaged the respondents in follow-up phone calls to ensure good response rate. Arithmetic mean was used to analyze data related to the research question. Standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. The mean ratings were interpreted using the real limit of 3.50. Thus, any item that had a mean rating of 3.50 and above was regarded as agreed while any item with a mean rating less than 3.50 was regarded as not agreed. The t-test statistical tool was used in the analysis of hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, it meant that there was a significant difference between mean scores. Conversely, where the calculated p-value was greater than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), it meant that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was accepted.

RESULTS

Research Questions 1: To what extent do different leadership approaches influence the performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria?

TABLE 1: Ratings of respondents on the extent autocratic style of leadership contributes to the performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria?

S/N	Aspects of autocratic style of leadership	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Denying employees freedom to express their views	2.30	.46	Low Extent
2	Not welcoming questions or ideas from employees in matters related to organization's affairs	2.20	.40	Low Extent
3	Refusing to allow employees participate in the decision-making process	2.10	.46	Low Extent
4	Taking vital decisions affecting employees without consulting them	2.39	.46	Low Extent
5	Disallowing employees to use their own judgment in solving work-related problems	1.43	.53	Very Low Extent
6	Disallowing employees to demonstrate initiative and creativity in their work performance	2.23	.46	Low Extent
7	Using threats and coercion as major means of getting employees perform their duties	2.20	.40	Low Extent
8	Discouraging co-operation among employees in the course of discharging assigned duties	1.40	.50	Very Low Extent
9	Blocking interpersonal relationship with employees	2.38	.52	Low Extent
10	Firing employees without fair hearing	1.45	.53	Very Low Extent
11	Giving employees responsibilities without commensurate authority	2.44	.50	Low Extent
12	Disregarding employees' welfare matters	1.39	.49	Very Low Extent
Cluster Mean		1.99		Low Extent

Data in Table 1 show that all the items have mean ratings ranging from 1.39 to 2.44 meaning that some affect to a very low extent while some affects to a low extent. The cluster mean of 1.99 shows that, in the opinion of the respondents, autocratic leadership style contributes to organizational performance of constructions industries to a low extent. The standard deviations of 0.40 to 0.53 show that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

TABLE 2: Ratings of respondents on the extent democratic style of leadership contributes to the performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria?

S/N	Aspects of autocratic style of leadership	Mean	SD	Decision
13	Considering employees' suggestions while making vital decisions	4.00	.45	High Extent
14	Assisting employees to solve their work-related problems	4.30	.46	High Extent
15	Giving employees liberty to use their initiatives in accomplishing tasks	4.30	.78	High Extent
16	Allowing employees to discuss matters freely	3.80	.40	High Extent
17	Consulting employees before taking decisions affecting them	4.10	.54	High Extent
18	Giving employees a feeling that they are part of the organization and allowing them to contribute to decisions for its betterment	4.20	.40	High Extent
19	Allowing employees to discuss what needs to be done and how it should be done	4.30	.64	High Extent
20	Simply being approachable	4.20	.87	High Extent
21	Discussing upcoming plans and projects with employees	3.80	.75	High Extent
Cluster Mean		4.11		High Extent

The data in Table 2 shows that all the items have mean ratings ranging from 3.80 to 4.30 meaning that all the items contribute to organizational performance construction industries to a high extent. The cluster mean score of 4.11 indicate that, in the opinion of the respondents, democratic leadership style contributes to organizational performance of construction industries to a high extent. The standard deviations of 0.40 to 0.87 show that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

TABLE 3: Ratings of respondents on the extent transformational style of leadership contributes to the performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria?

S/N	Aspects of autocratic style of leadership	Mean	SD	Decision
23	Providing employees with comfortable physical working environment	4.20	.48	High Extent
24	Building employees' capacity for competitive advantage	4.10	.43	High Extent
25	Acknowledging employees' efforts in achieving goals	4.40	.45	High Extent
26	Giving employees information on the need for change in the organization	3.49	.46	Moderate Extent
27	Spending time to teach and coach employees	4.23	.52	High Extent
28	Providing employees with adequate resources to accomplish tasks	4.13	.44	High Extent
29	Providing employees with adequate resources to accomplish tasks	4.13	.44	High Extent
30	Providing employees with adequate resources to accomplish tasks	4.13	.44	High Extent
31	Providing employees with adequate resources to accomplish tasks	4.13	.44	High Extent
32	Encouraging teamwork among employees	4.60	.41	Very High Extent
33	Addressing individual employee's needs and desires	4.50	.50	Very High Extent
34	Assisting employees in developing their skills and strengths	3.58	.51	High Extent
35	Welcoming creativity and innovations from employees	3.54	.52	High Extent
36	Allowing employees use their initiative in performing tasks	3.55	.53	High Extent
37	Supporting employees to in-service-training to enhance their competencies	4.39	.48	High Extent
Cluster Mean		4.06		High Extent

Data in Table 3 show that item numbers 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33 and 34 have mean ratings ranging from 3.54 to 4.40 meaning that the items contribute to performance in construction industries to a high extent. Items 29 and 30 have mean ratings of 4.60 and 4.50 respectively meaning that they contribute to a very high extent while item 26 has a mean rating of 3.49 which means that it contributes to a moderate extent. The cluster mean of 4.06 indicate that, in the opinion of the respondents, transformational style of leadership contributes to performance of construction industries in South-East Nigeria to a high extent. The standard deviations of 0.41 to 0.53 show that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

TABLE 4: Ratings of respondents on the extent transactional style of leadership contributes to organizational performance of small-scale industries.

S/N	Aspects of autocratic style of leadership	Mean	SD	Decision
38	Strictly supervising employees' activities	2.00	.44	Low Extent
39	keeping track of all employees' mistakes	2.30	.45	Low Extent
40	Emphasizing maintenance of rules and standards in the organization	2.60	.58	Moderate Extent
41	Making employees aware of what they will receive when set goals are achieved	2.80	.50	Moderate Extent
42	Demonstrating reactive approach to problems (waiting until problems occur before taking corrective measures)	2.10	.48	Low Extent
43	Focusing attention on employees' irregularities, mistakes, and deviations from standards	2.20	.46	Low Extent
44	Emphasizing on rewards and punishments as a means of motivation	2.30	.44	Low Extent
45	Over-emphasizing on completion of tasks	2.20	.47	Low Extent
46	Paying little attention to employees' welfare and feelings	2.80	.52	Moderate Extent
47	Increasing employees' salaries and fringe benefits	2.80	.52	Moderate Extent

The data in Table 4 shows that almost all the items were rated low extent except items number 37 and 38 which were rated moderate extent and have mean ratings ranging from 2.60 to 2.80 as regards the extent transactional style of leadership contributes to organizational performance in construction industries. The cluster mean of 2.44 indicate that, in the opinion of the respondents, transactional style of leadership contributes to performance of construction industries in South-East Nigeria to a low extent. The standard deviations of 0.44 to 0.54 show that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of contractors and employees on the extent to which leadership approaches influence performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria.

Data obtained in respect of hypothesis 1 were analyzed and presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5: Summary of t-test comparison of the mean ratings of respondents on the extent leadership styles effect organizational performance of building construction projects.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Contractors	103	2.08	.11	0.05	349	0.93	.067	Not Significant
Employees	248	2.08	.14					

Data in Table 5 show that contractors and employees in South East Nigeria do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent styles of leadership contributes to organizational performance of building construction industries with mean scores of 2.08 and 2.16 while the corresponding standard deviations are .11 and .14. The Table indicated a t-value of 0.93, at degree of freedom of 195 and a p-value of .067. Testing at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is not significant, since the p-value is greater than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of contractors and employees on the extent to which leadership approaches influence performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria. Hence, the hypothesis was not rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that autocratic style of leadership contributes to organizational performance of building construction industries in South East Nigeria to a low extent. The results revealed the major aspects of autocratic style of leadership which the employees indicated that contribute to performance in their organizations to a low extent. These include denying employees freedom to express their views, not welcoming questions or ideas from employees in matters related to organization's affairs, taking vital decisions affecting employees without consulting the employees, disallowing employees to demonstrate initiative and creativity in their work performance, using threats and coercion as major means of getting employees perform their duties, disregarding employees' welfare matters and so on. This finding is also in consonance Idowu (2012) who investigated the extent to which autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles affect organizational performance in some selected small-scale industries in South-western Nigeria comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States. Findings from the study revealed that 62 percent of the respondents described the leadership style in their organization as autocratic. This shows that the business owners never entertain any form of contribution from the employees.

The findings of the study revealed that democratic style of leadership contributes to organizational performance of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria to a high extent. The results revealed the respondents rated all the aspects of democratic leadership style as contributing to performance in their organizations to a high extent. These include considering employees' suggestions while making vital decisions, assisting employees to solve their work-related problems, giving employees liberty to use their initiatives in accomplishing tasks, consulting employees before taking decisions on matters affecting them and so on. This finding is in consonance with Yahaya et al. (2014) who asserted that the democratic management style means facilitating the conversation, encouraging people to share their ideas, and then synthesizing all the available information into the best possible decision.

The findings on transformational leadership style and organizational performance revealed that employees are of the opinion that transformational leadership style contributes to performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria to a high extent. The results revealed the major aspects of transformational style of leadership which the employees indicated that contribute to performance in their organizations to a low extent. These include providing employees with comfortable physical working environment, building employees' capacity for competitive advantage, acknowledging employees' efforts in achieving goals, spending time to teach and coach employees, giving employees information on the need for change in the organization and so on. This is in agreement with Ismaila et al. (2019) who asserted that managers exercising transformational leadership style focus on the development of value system of employees, their motivational level and moralities with the development of their skills. This style of leadership according to Ismaila et al acts as a bridge between leaders and followers to develop clear understanding of followers' interest, values and motivational level.

The findings of the study revealed that transactional style of leadership contributes to organizational performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria to a low extent. The findings of the study thus revealed a significant negative relationship between transactional leadership style and performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria. This means that organizational performance tends to be low when leaders adopt transactional leadership style.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the study concluded that the adoption of democratic and transformational leadership styles will enhance the performance of building construction projects in South East Nigeria. Thus, a combination of democratic and transformational leadership styles are the most appropriate leadership styles for improving organizational performance of construction industries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- (1) Managers of building construction industries in South-East of Nigeria should apply a combination of democratic and transformational leadership styles so as to continuously improve on their organizational performance.
- (2) Managers of construction industries should adopt leadership styles that are in tandem with the set goals, cultural values and organizational peculiarities of their firms as there is no one best leadership style.
- (3) Managers of construction industries should endeavor to regularly delegate responsibilities to their employees so as to give them a sense of belonging.
- (4) Managers should always involve the employees when certain decisions are to be taken in the organizations especially those pertaining to employees' welfare.

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