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Examining the Effectiveness of Leadership Styles on Project Performance a Case Study of Road Construction Projects in Chipata District

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Abstract
Good leadership of road construction projects plays an important role in implementation and achievement in chipata. This study exams the effectiveness of leadership styles on project performance, a case study of road construction projects in chipata district. Specifically, the study sought to identify major leadership styles employed in running road construction projects, to establish the extent to which leadership styles influence project performance and to examing the relationship between leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing project implementation in various road construction projects. Qualitative and Quantitative research methods were used under the mixed research approach. A total of 80 respondents comprising of 20 project managers, 10 road engineers, and 50 employees were interviewed using interview guides and Questionnaires respectively. In this study both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were used. The findings revealed that democratic leadership styles mostly influence employee performance (R-value was 0.932), implying that there is a strong and positive influence and significant at p=0.004 level of democratic leadership style on performance achievement. For Laissez faire leadership style, the relationship revealed negative influence on students' academic performance and was very weak (R-value of 0.1) and not significant (p=0.072). Autocratic leadership style, although the relationship was very strong (R=0.546, the relationship was insignificant with p value = 0.08. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that government should ensure that project managers are given appropriate orientations before they are appointed to work on site. Additionally, project managers are asked to use more democratic leadership style if they want employees to achieve or excel good project performance. This study exams the effectiveness of leadership styles on project performance, a case study of road construction projects in chipata district. Specifically, the study sought to identify major leadership styles employed in running road construction projects, to establish the extent to which leadership styles influence project performance and to examine the relationship between leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing project implementation in various road construction projects.

Keywords: Project Performance, road construction, success, leadership

1.0 Introduction
Leadership is the process of guiding others to complete a certain task. Leadership is a source of inspiration and guidance to members of a team. Democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, bureaucratic, servant, and transactional leadership styles are all lauded as viable methods of guidance in which project implementation can utilize to varying degrees of success. The general consensus is that there is no standard style of "one-fits-all" in organizational leadership, and various styles may be conjured for desired results.

However, despite this liberal approach, all styles of leadership must strive to meet one end: driving the organization towards meeting its visions and surpassing the goals defined while also maintaining ethicality and retaining the elements of motivation and enthusiasm that keeps the team members focused.

1.1 Statement of the Problem
According to chan *et al* (2020) the need to enhance project performance has been on for several years and has resulted in

identification of critical success factors. In spite of this, poor project performance seems to be a universal phenomenon in construction projects. As noted earlier, leadership is a critical success factor in general management hence it would be expected that project manager's leadership style should influence project performance. However, an analysis of existing literature on project performance and the role of leadership has resulted in findings that are inconsistent. For instance Keegan *et al* (2019) noted that although several studies found transformational leadership to be a predicator of project performance, found no significant link between transformation leadership style and project performance. Locally, majority of the studies on project performance have focused on determination of causes of time and cost overrun. Despite the importance of road construction projects in chipata district of eastern province, the amount of resources invested and the fact that the utility of these projects depends upon successful completion, the performance of most projects in the construction sector has been poor with majority experiencing time and cost over-run (Manyindo *et al* 2019). Inconsistencies in international research findings on the relationship between project manager's leadership style, lack of local studies and poor project performance in chipata triggered the need for this study. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between project manager's leadership style and performance of road construction in chipata district of eastern province. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between project manager's leadership style and project performance.

1.2 Specific Objectives
i) To establish the types of leadership styles that lead to project success in management.
ii) To examine the effects of leadership styles on project performance
iii) To determine the relationships between leadership styles and academic qualifications.
iv) To determine the limitations of leadership styles on projects.

1.3 Research Questions
The researcher collected data with the use of open ended questionnaires and the following is a sample of the research questions.
i) What type of leadership styles are project leaders using in order to achieve project success?
ii) What are the effects of leadership styles on project performance?
iii) Is there any relationships that exists between leadership styles and academic qualifications?
iv) What are the limitations of leadership styles on projects management?

Theoretical/Conceptual framework leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiration, motivation, and individualized consideration, has been widely studied in relation to organizational outcomes (Khan *et al*., 2022; Ahmad *et al*., 2024). leaders foster a shared vision, encourage intellectual stimulation, and empower followers to achieve collective goals (Abualoush *et al* (2019). leadership centers around a system of clear expectations, defined roles, and performance-based rewards. Nyamota *et al* (2024). Leaders employing this style prioritize monitoring and controlling processes, ensuring adherence to established standards, and addressing deviations promptly. (Olasunkanmi *et al* (2023).

Independent Variables
Leadership Skills
Problem solving skill
Effective communication skills Professional expertise
Leadership Experience
Knowledge and skills Quality of work
Past involvement
Leadership Style
Autocratic
Democratic
Leases- Faire
Dependent Variables
Project Performance
- Project completion within time, budget and Quality
- Objectives are achieved
- Beneficiary satisfaction

2. Research Methodology
Research Design/Methods/Approach Exploratory case study design was going to be used because the study was conducted in various selected private companies and public government institutions. The exploratory case study design shall be employed with the goal to prove that further investigation in this study was necessary, and have a better understanding of the existing problem by using multiple research methods.

Philosophy for this Research
The study adopted pragmatism research philosophy that integrates the use of multiple research methods such as qualitative and quantitative. Pragmatism research philosophy integrates more than one research approaches and research strategies (positivism and interpretivism research philosophies) within the same study. As Bajpai (2019) explained that a research philosophy is just a belief in which a researcher has about the ways in which data about a phenomenon should be collected and analyzed. A questionnaire was the main data collection instrument for all respondents, the study focused on 80 respondents and results were statistically descriptive in nature and presented in tables, pie charts, and bar charts. The target population were the road construction projects employees mainly in chipata central constituency central business district in eastern province namely chipata chadiza road construction company and chipata lundazi road projects.

3. Literature Review
Project management is defined as an application of knowledge, skills, and techniques to project activities in order to meet the needs of project requirements, according to Heagney (2011).
Leadership, in these applications, is required to enhance successful project deliverables. With various leadership styles and methodologies this can be achieved. Kerzner (2013) states four elements, which are essential when exercising good project management leadership methodologies, namely effective communication, effective co-operation, effective team work and trust. Effective communication can be implemented within the project team, amongst internal customers, and the wider organization. Effective co-operation is required within the wider organization in order to align to its objectives. Effective team work is obtained within the internal projects team, and the element of trust is exercised throughout the life cycle of a project. Rad and Leven (2022:56) stipulate that project managers should be competent in most or all of the details of the technical area of the project

to ensure that those who manage projects have appropriate skills to achieve success for the project or enterprise. A systematic literature review of studies from 2017 to 2022 found various types of leadership styles and their impact on employee performance.

Researchers have examined leadership traits, styles, skills, and motivational factors for project managers to achieve success in projects.

Germano (2019) determined that bureaucratic leaders focus on processes and procedures, not people, leading to ineffective employee development and motivation.

Ojokuku *et al* (2012) concluded that bureaucratic leadership has a negative impact on organizational performance. According to Sarver & Miller (2014), leadership is about responsibility and proper management of the human and material resources to bring change and enable progress. Transformational leadership is essential for all leaders who have the vision to inspire change. Leaders in all faculties, including business, law enforcement agencies, political scopes, and managerial positions, are responsible for pushing change by inspiring cooperation among team members

4. Results and Findings

Objective Number I: To determine the relationships between leadership styles and academic qualifications.

Chi Square Test

	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(0-E) 2/E
certificate	27	17	2.08
Degree	14	17	0.33
Diploma	16	18	0.32
Phd	10	17	2.05
Total	67	67	X² =4.71

Calculation and Result

- Chi-Square Test Statistic (χ^2): 4.71
- Degrees of Freedom (df): number of categories – 1 = 4 - 1 = 3
- Critical Value: The critical value for df=3 and α=0.045 is 7.81.

Interpretation

The calculated χ^2 (4.71) is less than the critical value (7.81). The p-value is > 0.045.

Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. "certificate" has the highest count, the difference from the expected distribution is statistically significant enough to conclude that there is overwhelmingly a relationship between academic qualifications and leadership styles.

Objective Number II: To Establish the Types of Leadership Styles that Lead to Project Success in Management

Analysis/Discussion

Figure 1: which leadership style is the most effective in road construction project performance Results gathered from participants indicate that democratic leadership style is the most effective followed by transformational leadership style. The least effective leadership styles is the autocratic and lastly laissez faire leadership styles.
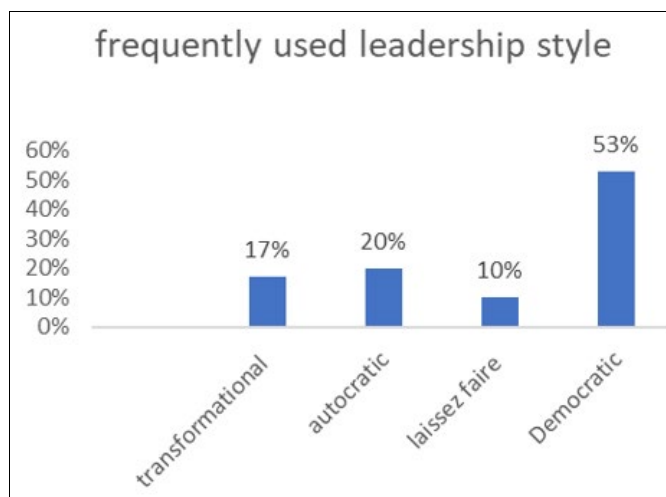
Objective Number Three: To examine the effects of leadership styles on project performance

Analysis/Discussion

In evaluating employee overall performance, four constructs, each one evaluating self-assessment of the respondents' quality on the job and productivity and comparison of each of those variables against other employees doing the very same sort of work. A scale evaluation was run on the four items and a below standard Cronbach's alpha was generated. Subsequent to reverse coding the third and fourth statement, the researcher got an expected negative Cronbach's alpha. The two assertions ended up being dropped from the scale test and the first two statements yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.819 and was integrated to the scale. This led to use of two items rather than four in analyzing employee performance.
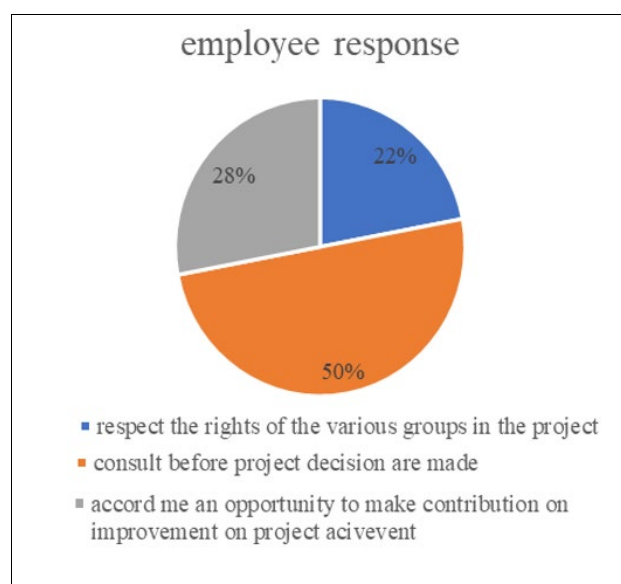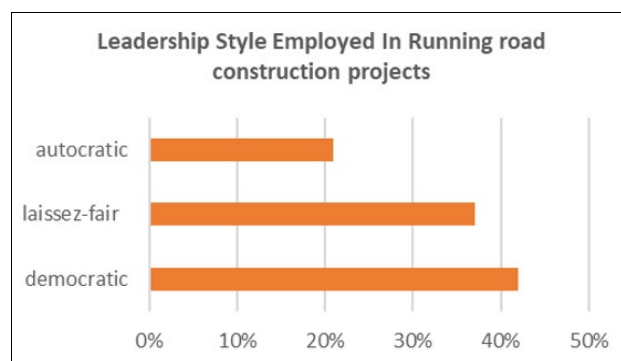
The table below describes the results of the analysis of employee performance. Productivity was rated well above the average with a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.764, indicating an average employee rates their quality of performance on the job above the average and the response of employees are also low in variation. The quality of performance was rated with a mean of 3.88 and S.D of 0.725. The researcher observed that the average employee rated productivity on the job above average.

Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D
Rate the quality of your performance?	67	2	5	3.88	0.725
How do you rate your productivity on the job?	67	2	5	3.93	0.76
Employee performance (Overall)	67	2	5	3.902	0.685
Valid N (List wise)	67				

Objective Number Four: To determine the limitations of leadership styles on projects.

Results/Findings

Leadership Style Employed In Running road construction projects

employee response

- respect the rights of the various groups in the project
- consult before project decision are made
- accord me an opportunity to make contribution on improvement on project acivevent

As shown in the figure above majority of the respondents they balanced their leadership styles which are (42%) democratic, (37%) laissez-fair and (21%) autocratic. Therefore the responses shown in table reflect that democratic leadership style is most employed in running projects than the other styles. Although few of them suggested that a good leader should not stick to only one type of leadership style. Sometimes is compelled to employ more than one of style according to change of situation and environment in order to enhance the performance of the employees. Democratic leadership style gives room to subordinates to share in planning and implementing the intended goals objectives of their project.

Employees' Response on Influences of Democratic Leadership Style
The figure below presents employees' response on influences of democratic leadership style on employee performance.
Majority of the employees felt that consultation before project decisions are made has a high influence on democratic leadership style.
Few employees were for the idea that respecting the rights of the various organized groups and association in the project has an influence on democratic leadership style. This implies that employees felt as part and parcel in the efforts towards improved performance. However respecting the rights of various groups is important and since employees felt that they are not, they will tend to be reluctant in working towards improving employee performance. This findings above was affirmed by Nsubuga, (2018) who argues that leadership styles in projects have continuously advocated for the

democratic style of leadership as it has been seen to improve eemployee' performance of the projects, so it is through this style of leadership that employees can be involved in the maintenance of good achievement through their involvement in the organizations' administration. The management should therefore encourage and recognize the contribution of the members for the project to be successful. In support of this assertion, Dury and Levin (2020) observed that democratic/participation leadership or management style has a potential of improving the employee performance. Furthermore, Nsubuga, (2018) who stated that leadership styles in projects have continuously advocated for the democratic style of leadership as it has been seen to improve the performance of the schools. Democratic leadership style in secondary school set up is characterized by many attributes. First the members of the organization should be motivated to participate and exposed and sensitized on their needs and rights in the participation (Shaeffer, 2020). Secondly, participation should lead to decision making. The decisions made are normally qualitative as they are made by a group. However, the project managers still has the final authority of approving the decision (Powers, 2018). thirdly, increased communication among the members fourth; shared responsibility and authority, fifth; participation should be voluntary (Stine, 2020).
This means employees and other members should not be coerced to participate.

4.1 Presentation of Research Findings
Most of project managers in the study area are democratic. Based on sex of respondents' males project managers were autocratic and female project managers were democratic. The age and academic qualification as well as job experience of the project managers, however, found to be a critical factor in influencing the leadership style employed. Older project managers, higher academic qualification and experienced managers tended to lead by pointing all three leadership styles. Therefore the study results mean that every leader has a unique style to counter the nature of the tasks. However, because most of the managers, who participated in this study, were above 45 years, the study inferred that managers probably become more democratic with age, professional maturity and experience. The different challenges they have faced at the end of the day have enabled them to automatically suggest a variation in leadership styles and a proper variation in leadership styles as project managers cannot boast of one style of leadership.

4.2 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations
This chapter presents the summary of the objectives of the study, conclusions and the recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Summary of the Study Overall
Most of project managers in the study area are democratic. Based on sex of respondents' males project managers were autocratic and female project managers were democratic. The age and academic qualification as well as job experience of the project managers, however, found to be a critical factor in influencing the leadership style employed. Older project managers, higher academic qualification and experienced managers tended to lead by pointing all three leadership styles. Therefore the study results mean that every leader has a unique style to counter the nature of the tasks. However, because most of the managers, who participated in this study,

were above 45 years, the study inferred that managers probably become more democratic with age, professional maturity and experience. The different challenges they have faced at the end of the day have enabled them to automatically suggest a variation in leadership styles and a proper variation in leadership styles as project managers cannot boast of one style of leadership. The findings revealed that there was high respect for democratic leadership style to employees. This showed that there was pressure on employees to produce results, demand to attain work, insistence to complete the tasks, close monitoring of employees on site to attain results and much concentration to fulfillment of short term goals. These unfortunately compromised the quality of academic performance where little effort was made by the project managers giving more attention to fulfillment of short-term goals. On accountability of employees on their work, the results show that managers made their employees accountable during the trainings and through the use of professional documents. Employees felt that managers ensured that work has been attended to in making them accountable. On this style, striving towards common goal of fulfilling the project vision and mission was the major influence of project managers who used transformational leadership style. Employees said that displaying high values and reinforcing them symbolically influenced project managers to use this leadership style. Findings found that the majority of managers believe in being role models to ensure ethical and moral conduct among employees. Democratic leadership style is the least used leadership style by project managers. In this style, there is high consultation before making decisions. Giving workers' autonomy in decision making about improving performance was less used. Workers were in agreement with the managers on consultation before making decisions.

Conclusion

The study concluded that democratic leadership style influenced workers' performance on a greater extent. For example employees reported that the leadership style of their principal was fair. The researcher also concluded that employees and project managers ensured that the workers observed punctuality in work attendance. They ensured they were roles model to display high levels of ethical and moral conduct while workers indicated that their principal ensured that the work was covered in time to ensure strategic improvement in employee' performance in the organisation. The study rated the influences were rewarding workers for job well done was rated high followed by ensure workers do not deviate from performance pursuit, they do not frequently gauge performance against set targets and offer incentives and lastly giving more attention to fulfillment of short-term goals. Workers on this aspect felt that much concentration to fulfillment of short term goals was given by the managers, ensuring performance in improvement towards quality results and lastly was to monitor the performance to ensure value added progress.

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations for the study.
From the study's findings, the leizzer faire style of managers was found to have a low effect on project performance in chipata. It was accordingly recommended that managers review their use of transactional leadership style in their management of projects to boost performance. Most recent conceptions of educational leadership indicate that there is a move away from autocratic leadership styles to a more transformative mode of decision making in schools. This is in a bid to ensure that decision-making takes place at the lowest possible level to boost outcome. This study has established that project performance and in particular workers excellence in chipata was not as well positively related to the democratic leadership style employed by managers and that the democratic leadership style is the least used style in the construction projects to improve performance. It was therefore recommended that the project managers of road construction in particular be encouraged to increase use this style of leadership in the management of projects to improve their attainment. (iii) The Ministry of local government and housing can use the findings to formulate training programs for managers. These programs should be focused to use of transformational, democratic and transactional leadership styles to improve workers performance in chipata district.

Recommendation for Further Study

The following areas were suggested for further study: This study was conducted in chipata district central constituency targeting some selected road construction projects. It is suggested that a similar study should be conducted in other districts and municipalities in Zambia to see what is taking place in other road projects on leadership styles in relation to employee performance.

Acknowledgments

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