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Relationship between leadership style and project success among IT Professionals in Nigeria: Implications to Project Management

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between leadership style of IT Professionals and IT project success in Nigeria. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to IT professionals in Nigeria, and a total of 59 completed questionnaires were received resulting in a total of 39.3% response rate. The findings of the study indicate that there is a positive relationship between project manager's leadership styles and IT projects success in Nigeria. In other words the leadership behavior of IT project manager results in project success in varying degrees based on the type of style exhibited. The result also indicated that the IT project managers in our sample exhibited more of transformational than any other styles investigated.

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INTRODUCTION

Project success has become a reoccurring decimal in the project management literature yet scholars disagree on its measure or clearly defined what it is. Most authors have suggested that defining project success is a difficult and 'elusive concept' (Thomas and Fernández 2008) as well as a 'vague term' (Lientz and Rea 2001). This situation has been complicated with the use of the two terms project 'success factors' and 'success criteria' as if they mean the same thing. Baccarini (1999) differentiated project 'success factors' and 'success criteria', while he explained the former to be factors that facilitates the achievement of success and the success criteria are used to measure success.

This lack of clear understanding could have led to the negative performance and outcome of IT projects. IT project has become synonymous with failure and results of projects continue to disappoint stakeholders despite research and experience from previous projects (Akinola, Ajao, and Akinkunmi 2011; Cooke-Davies 2001; Teoh 2010). The rate of IT project failure has reach an alarming proportion, Standish-Group reported that IT projects recorded a success rate of 16% in 1994 meaning over 80% of IT projects undertaken by Fortune500 failed (Standish-Group 1995). The same failure rate applies to IT projects in Nigeria. for example Energo Nigeria Ltd transmission project achieved less than 5% implementation in 2008, while African Development Bank cancelled 80% of its projects in Nigeria due to project failure (Olusegun and Alabi 2011)

The influence of leadership on organizational success has been recognized in general management at organizational level, teamwork, motivation, stress, employee commitment for a very long time (Lo *et al.* 2010; Müller and Turner 2010; Turner and Müller 2005). In the context of leadership we considered the project manager as a leader, a position supported by Turner who referred the project manager as the 'Chief Executive of the temporary organization'. The project manager is considered as a leader and charged with the responsibility for achieving project success, yet not much have been said of the contribution of the leadership role of the project manager in terms of project success.

The author's interest on a research on this yet to be explored area in relation to IT projects in Nigeria is anchored on the fact that the findings from this study will contribute to the body of knowledge, more importantly we have related this empirically to the Nigerian IT project environment, an area that is still in lack of literature. Furthermore, our study has also practical implication to the organizations, IT manager, project managers and project team members. Practically, the findings can be translated into guidelines for IT management in the resourcing of project manager for projects as well as assist project manager in the application of leadership styles for effective results. Secondly, the knowledge of IT project manager's leadership

styles can lead to 'project manager fit to projects', especially in creating of leadership competency profile for project managers which could serve as pool for resource and training of project managers.

IT Project Success:

The challenges of defining project success affects also IT projects, with so many metrics and perceptions to account for, indeed project success is a difficult and elusive concept, with many different meanings (Thomas and Fernández 2008) to different people. Information system success is usually defined as composite of performance measures including cost, time, and savings (Jiang, Klein, and Discenza 2002), based on this they noted that from experience only a few system projects are completed within budget and schedule as a result the majority that missed this metric are labeled failed project by most investigating system development report. In support of this position, Standish Group, which surveys information systems project yearly (Lewis 2000), classified IT project performance into three, resolution type-1 or project success meaning project completed on time and on budget, with all features and functions as initially specified; resolution type-2 or challenged defined as project is completed and operational, but over budget, over the time estimate, and offers fewer features and functions than originally specified; and resolution type-3 or project impaired, described as the project is cancelled at some point during the development cycle, as a result type-1 is a successful project while type-2 and 3 are labeled failed project. To present that statistically the report showed overall success rate (type-1) was only a meager 16.2% with the failure rate (type-2 and 3 combined) accounting for over 80% (Standish-Group 1995). Wateridge (1998) however, question the use of on time, budget and specification as sole criteria, he therefore notes that such thinking could arise when correct success criteria are not identified from the outset or probably identified, but attention is on the wrong critical success factors, he therefore suggest that there is need to identify how IS/IT projects, and their products, are to be judged successful and the factors that influences the success. Most organizations uses the metrics – whether the project was completed on time, on budget, and delivered the initial requirements to determine whether an IT project is success or failure and lamented that this do more harm than good (Levinson 2008).

Project Critical Success Factor (CSF):

In the past it has been common believe that once the project schedule is properly developed then a project success would result, thus making the project manager and project team to focus on project scheduling problems and neglecting other factors, with the assumption that a development of a better scheduling techniques would result in better management and then project success (Belassi and Tukel 1996). To Belassi and Tukel (1996) factors outside the control of management which could determine the success or failure of a project are referred to as critical success / failure factors. In regards to critical success factors, there are numerous studies that have listed such factors (see table 2-3). Cash and Fox (1992) in their study listed the following as success factors; management's involvement, leadership, staffing, control and reporting. Slevin and his associates also defined critical success factors as the few key areas where things must go right for the business to flourish (Slevin, Stieman, and Boone 1991). Based on this definition they suggested that CSF as an effective starting for complex task such as measuring the performance of Information System (IS) organizations. The following ten CSFs were generated which they considered as global in nature: network reliability, data communication network, input/output services, documentation, problem reports, consulting, hardware repair, proactive planning, facilities management, and internal support. CSFs could also be regarded as few variables that must go well to ensure success of an undertaking and must be given special and continual attention to bring about high performance (Thite 1997), from this definition it is not enough to list the CSFs, but it must be given a special and continual attention to ensure one, they are present in the project and two, how they are working out as the project progresses. In their work Slevin and Pinto on critical success factor, ten CSFs were identified, which included; Project mission, top management support, project schedule/ plans, client consultation, personnel, technical tasks, client acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication, and troubleshooting (Pinto 1990).

Leadership and Project Success:

Turner and Muller (2005) observed there is lack of evidence from the literature that suggests project manager's leadership styles and competence as key to project success, however, submits that there is clear evidence in the general management literature that accounts for the general manager's leadership style and competency as key influencing factor to successful performance in business. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between leadership style and organizational effectiveness and performance, as well as employee's commitment (Lo *et al.* 2010) while literature has ignored the effect of the project manager's leadership style to project success (Chemers 1997; Turner and Müller 2005; Dvir, Sadeh, and Malach-Pines 2006). The recent work of Lo (*et al.* 2010) also provides a connection to leadership styles and organizational commitment. Lo (*et al.* 2010) found leadership has direct impact on organization commitment but not in the context of project success. A number of studies have tried to make an association between project manager's leadership style and project success, however, the results have been without agreement, while in their study Turner and Muller (2005) found no relationship between project manager's leadership style and project success, Surprisingly in their later

study Muller and Turner made a contrasting conclusion to their 2005 study, they concluded that the project manager's leadership style influences project success (Müller and Turner 2007). Keegan and Hartog (2004) as well as (Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011) found no relationship with project success, but predicts that the project manager needs more of transformational style than transactional. The conclusion of Muller and Turner further confirm the need for our research as the result of their study is not universal and different leadership styles are appropriate for different types of project. Owing to this apparent disagreement in results and the difference in the leadership style variable studied, this study will aim to investigate leadership styles in the context of transformation and transactional and their relationship with project success, and hope to contribute to the body of knowledge especially as we present it in the context of IT project in Nigeria.

Project Manager's Leadership Styles:

According to Cooper (2003) leadership style refers to how leaders behave towards potential followers. According to Muller and Turner (2007) traits and behavior (style) are competencies and if that stands, it follows that its application for example influence can bring about certain result on the certain leadership styles lead to better results than others (Müller and Turner 2007).

From this perspective the authors examines the literature on leadership to identify the various styles and how they can lead to a better result. Dulewicz and Higgs (2003) cited in Muller and Turner (2007) notes their study of 250 managers identified three leadership styles; goal oriented, involving and engaging, and concluded that goal oriented leaders are best on low complexity project, involving leaders best on medium complexity projects and engaging leaders are best on high complexity projects. From the point of decision making and how much the leader involves the team comes the work of Lewins *et al* (1939) which identified three leadership styles; Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-faire, from the result of their study the democratic showed the most effective while excessive authoritarian style led to revolution and the laissez-faire approach indicated an incoherent result as compared to when there was an active leadership involvement (Lewin, Lippitt, and White 1939).

In relation to leadership style and how it affects the emotions of followers and its results on effectiveness, in their book primal leadership, Goleman and his group describes six leadership styles: visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, and commanding. The six styles the grouped into two, and notes that the first four will foster resonance in the team while the last two pacesetter and commanding can foster dissonance, however, each of them can produce a good result when applied to the right situation (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee 2002). In the context of project management, Frame identified four leadership styles of project manager; laissez-faire, democratic, autocratic, and bureaucratic which he suggested that the styles are appropriate to different stages of project lifecycle and different team structures, in other words they are not fixed (Frame 1987). Bass and Avolio have given credence to transactional and transformational style of leadership. The question then is most of these style or the theories that relate to them were basically built within the operational business organization context, does the same outcome holds in project context? Several studies have pointed to the fact that transformational leadership are seen to be more effective by subordinates and superiors and tend to have higher performing units and business though in the general leadership context (Dvir, Sadeh, and Malach-Pines 2006; Keegan and Den Hartog 2004; Lo *et al.* 2010; Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011). While leading commentators have suggested transformational leadership to be of particular interest in the project based context, Keegan and Hartog (2004) as well as Muller and Turner predicts that transformational leadership would be more appropriate for the project manager, this appears to assume a project manager sticks to one given leadership style if so would be at variance with Prabhakar conclusion of 'switch leadership in projects' (Prabhakar n.d) and the combination proposal approach of Thite (1997). Thus we propose to test the following hypotheses;

H1: Transformational leadership style of project manager is positively correlated to project success.

H2: Transactional leadership style of project manager is positively correlated to project success.

H3: Laissez faire leadership style of project manager is negatively correlated to project success.

H4: The relationship between project manager with transformational leadership style and project success would be stronger than in project manager with transactional.

Methodology:

Sampling Method:

A number of methods exist for sampling, basically for the selection of the respondents who will provide answers to the study questions we need to ensure a proper means of selecting them. In this study the researcher adopts the convenience and snow ball sampling method which is a non-probabilistic method. Although a number of criticisms are associated with this method of sampling as regards the likelihood of introducing bias and the selected respondents may not be a representative of the entire population, however, it has its own advantage of being fast, inexpensive, easy and the subject are readily available. The researcher's choice of this method despite this noted weakness is on the basis of lack of effective professional regulation or organized professional membership of records in Nigeria for the identified study population where such information could

have been sort for. Kumar, therefore suggest that this method can be used when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified(Kumar 2011) which is the case with this study population. As a way to ensure the sampling is not biased all identified qualified potential IT professional respondents will be given an equal opportunity to participate in the survey. Through the Corporate Affairs Commission we will draw up a list of organization involve in IT related businesses, this would not capture some large organizations that have IT departments so we intend to also reach out to Oil and Gas companies in Nigeria who also have a well developed project framework.

Research Instruments:

After an exhaustive review of the literature that studied leadership styles and organizational performance, team effectiveness, job satisfaction, employee's commitment as well as project success, the decision to utilize an existing instrument that have shown some validity and used over time came to bear, the multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) was arrived at in measuring the leadership style of IT project managers in Nigeria. Similar studies for example (Dvir, Sadeh, and Malach-Pines 2006; Keegan and Den Hartog 2004; Thite 2000; Turner and Müller 2005; Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011) have utilized the same instrument.

Leadership Style Measurement:

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5x) developed by Bass and Avolio have featured in number of studies as a measurement for transformational leadership style, a position supported by the general acceptance of the instrument for measuring transformational leadership as shown above, a position further supported by Bass "the most widely accepted instrument to measure transformational leadership is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)"(Bass and Riggio 2006). Our decision is also supported by Keegan and Harthog "there are several reasons to suggest that transformational leadership is of particular relevance in the context" (Keegan and Den Hartog 2004)of project-based and that the transformational leadership style will be more suited for project manager (Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011). Despite these acceptance Antonakis and associates have noted that the instrument MLQ and the theory has faced some criticism on its 'stability and the predictive validity' of the theory, however, they found little or no controversy surrounding the predictive nature of the theory (Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam 2003). The MLQ contains 45 items that identify and measure nine key leadership behaviors which Bass and Avolio referred to as Full Range Leadership (FRL), comprising 3 aspects of measures; transformational, transactional and non-transactional laissez-faire leadership style as well as leadership outcome such as satisfaction, effectiveness and extra effort.

Project Success Measurement:

The aspect of project performance instrument was developed based on the information from the literature reviews and similar studies, for example (Keegan and Den Hartog 2004; Thite 2000; Thomas and Buckle-Henning 2007; Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011) and primarily based on the work of (Pinto and Slevin 1992), Project Implementation Profile (PIP) as was tested in the work of Thite(Thite 1997). This measure the project performance based on the following factors; Budget performance, Schedule performance, quality and Customer satisfaction.

The team member were asked to rate the performance of the selected projects based on the performance factors on a five-point scale of 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree where 1 is the least while 5 is the highest (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). The reliability based on Cronbach's alpha was measured to range between .74 to .87 as Hair *et al* (1995) opined that Cronbach alpha of .50 or greater is acceptable (Nunnally 1978; Yang, Huang, and Wu 2011)

Data Collection:

The questionnaires were sent to IT professionals in Nigeria working in IT environment (IT organization or IT department) who have been a project team member in the execution of IT projects via email, face-book, by sending the web-link including an introductory attachment. We target IT professionals in the private sector not the public sector. Through the contacts and the snow ball method 150 qualified potential respondents who were contacted 59 returned completed questionnaires through online web-link. The respondents' completed questionnaires were collected and stored on the SurveyMonkey webpage, once the respondent submits the completed questionnaires online. This method was chosen for its inexpensive, quick, convenience and ability to deliver an objective response as the respondent's identity will not be required, can be done at the convenient of the respondent and cannot be influenced by the researcher.

Data Processing:

Once it was obvious to us that we were no longer getting more responses from the target respondents despite our repeated reminders through email and face-book as well as the fact that the completed and returned questionnaires were capable of giving us a cross-sectional view, we closed the survey. The completed

questionnaire data were scanned through on the SurveyMonkey website and downloaded into the researcher's computer hard drive as a file compatible with Excel and readable in SPSS. The data were imported into SPSS and checked for completeness and coding carried out to represent the intended constructs which the data represents.

Data Analysis:

In analyzing the relationship between the different leadership styles and project success, and how each of the variables in leadership style relates to the variables in project success, we analyzed quantitatively the data by using a correlation technique to test if there is any relationship and the direction of the correlation. Comparing the result from the various constructs within the independent variable as well as the project success allowed for the identification of the project manager's leadership style that is most related to project success. From the mean score for the independent variable, the construct for inspirational motivation a sub-set in transformational leadership records 4.01 while the least score came from Laissez faire of 1.96 supporting our prediction and the study of (Keegan and Den Hartog 2004). The performance outcome of the projects as the dependent variable were compared to see, high performing projects and the low performing projects so as to identify the leadership style that was most prevalent and correlated with project success. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v17) was used to carry out the analysis.

Results:

Transformational and the Project Success:

It was hypothesized in the study that transformational leadership style of IT project manager in Nigeria is positively correlated to project success. In order to validate this; we conducted a correlation analysis using SPSS for the five subscales of transformational leadership (independent variable) against the four identified scales of project success (dependent variable). As hypothesized, table 1 indicates that all the subscales of transformational leadership correlated positively with all the four subscales of project success with a correlation coefficient range of $r = .207$ and $r = .518$, thereby supporting our **hypothesis (H1)**. In our result, the transformational subscale idealized Influence reported the strongest correlation among the other scales of transformational; (Schedule: $r = .518$ $p = 0.000$ $p < 0.05$; Cost: $r = .410$ $p = 0.007$ $p < 0.05$; Quality: $r = .458$ $p = .002$ $p < 0.05$; Client Satisfaction: $r = .440$ $p = 0.004$ $p < 0.005$) while the weak correlations were found with individualized consideration especially with client satisfaction ($r = .207$ $p = 0.189$ $p > 0.05$) as well as idealized influence (behavior) against Schedule with a weak correlation of $r = .278$ $p = 0.075$ $p > 0.05$ which indicate not statistically significant as the p-value for both were above our 0.05 significance cut-off.

Table 1: Correlation Between Transformational Leadership And Project Success

Correlations between Transformational Leadership and Project Success					
Scales		Criteria - Cost	Criteria - Schedule	Criteria - Quality	Criteria Client Satisfaction
Inspirational Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.321*	.406**	.445**	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.008	.003	.006
	N	42	42	42	42
Idealized Influence (Behavior)	Pearson Correlation	.299	.278	.385*	.353*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.054	.075	.012	.022
	N	42	42	42	42
Idealized Influence (Attributed)	Pearson Correlation	.410**	.518**	.458**	.440**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000	.002	.004
	N	42	42	42	42
Individualized Consideration	Pearson Correlation	.332*	.292	.234	.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.060	.137	.189
	N	42	42	42	42
Intellectual Stimulation	Pearson Correlation	.354*	.446**	.418**	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	.003	.006	.004
	N	42	42	42	42

Transactional and the Project Success:

Our second hypothesis (H2), postulated that transactional leadership style of IT project manager in Nigeria is positively correlated to project success. To test this we ran a correlation of the transactional leadership scales against the scales of project success and table 2 reveals the results for the correlations. As hypothesized Contingent Reward and management-by-exception (Active) correlated positively with the four scales of project success, while management-by-exception (passive) correlated negatively with all the four scales of project

success scales, however, this was not a surprise as noted by Thite that this scale is usually low and negative (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Thite 1997). Overall the transactional leadership is positively correlated with project success which supports our second hypothesis (H2). Contingent Reward reported a weak correlation (Schedule: $r = .250$ $p = 0.110$ $p > 0.05$) to moderate (Cost: $.437$ $p = 0.004$ $p < 0.05$) positive correlation with project success as shown in table 4-13. However, the surprise came with the result of the management-by-exception (Active) that correlated positively stronger with all the four scales of project success as compared with contingent reward, though positively moderate as was in contingent reward; (Quality: $r = .471$ $p = 0.002$ $p < 0.05$; Cost: $r = .442$ $p = 0.003$ $p < 0.05$; Schedule: $r = .417$ $p = 0.006$ $p < 0.05$) indicating statistical significance.

Table 2: Correlation between Transactional Leadership and Project Success

Correlations between Transactional Leadership and Project Success					
Scales		Criteria - Cost	Criteria - Schedule	Criteria - Quality	Criteria Client Satisfaction
Contingent Reward	Pearson Correlation	.437**	.250	.363*	.303
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.110	.018	.051
	N	42	42	42	42
Management-by-Exception (Active)	Pearson Correlation	.442**	.417**	.471**	.340*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.006	.002	.027
	N	42	42	42	42
Management-by-Exception (Passive)	Pearson Correlation	-.175	-.159	-.354*	-.351*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.269	.315	.022	.023
	N	42	42	42	42

Laissez-faire Leadership & the Project Success:

Based on the need of our study and the literature it was important to consider the absence of a leader in a project in order to fully appreciate the value added by project manager and their style of leadership. In order to examine this, it was hypothesized that laissez-faire leadership style of IT project manager in Nigeria is negatively correlated to project success, in other words the absence of a leader in a project or a style that indicate leader who avoids decision, the more such behavior the less success the projects are. Table 3 indicates that laissez-faire correlated negatively to all the four criteria of project success just as it was to the three project outcome scales which points to the fact that this type of leadership behavior is less effective and produces less motivation as not encouraging extra effort. From the result the correlation ranges from $r = -.125$ to $r = -.406$ and specifically on Cost: $r = -.150$ $p = 0.345$ $p > 0.05$; Schedule: $r = -.125$ $p = 0.431$ $p > 0.05$; Quality: $r = -.406$ $p = 0.008$ $p < 0.05$; Client Satisfaction: $r = -.352$ $p = 0.022$ $p < 0.05$.

Table 3: Correlation between Laissez-faire Leadership and Project Success

Correlations between Laissez-faire Leadership and Project Success					
Scales		Criteria - Cost	Criteria - Schedule	Criteria - Quality	Criteria Client Satisfaction
Laissez-faire	Pearson Correlation	-.150	-.125	-.406**	-.352*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.345	.431	.008	.022
	N	42	42	42	42

Leadership styles and the Outcome Scales:

The leadership outcome had three constructs; extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction. The extra effort scale measured the extra effort put in by the project team based on their belief of motivation by the leadership behavior of their project manager. The effectiveness measured the perception of the project team on how effective their leader was, while the satisfaction considered how satisfied they were. This correlation was important as certain outcome is attributed to transformational leadership, for example the inspirational and idealized influence of transformational leader, their subordinates and superior tend to see their team put in extra effort and are effective as well as satisfied since they are not just doing it for reward. Table 4 reveals the relationship of the measured scales based on the coefficient and significance. Laissez-faire correlated negatively against all the three outcome scales which support our hypothesis (H3). Extra effort; $r = -.27$, $p = 0.073$ $p > 0.05$ and indicates a negative weak relationship between laissez-faire and extra effort, on the other hand a moderate negative relationship was seen with Effectiveness ($r = -.417$, $p = 0.005$ $p < 0.05$) and Satisfaction ($r = -.413$,

$p=0.005$ $p<0.05$). In the case of transformational scales, all the subscales indicated a strong positive relationship with the three outcome scales. This is in line with the literature, and the strongest relationship is shown with Idealized influence (Attributed) on all the three scales of outcome ($r= .792$, $p=0.000$ $p<0.05$) where effectiveness reported ($r=.726$, $p=0.000$ $p<0.05$) and Satisfaction ($r=.837$, $p=0.000$ $p<0.05$), this also support our hypothesis (H1 and H4). Transactional however, reported a mixed relationship with the three outcome scales, though not a surprise based on the literature, while contingent reward reported less strong positive relationship (Extra effort ; $r=.527$, $p=0.000$ $p < 0.05$; Effectiveness $r=.586$, $p=0.000$ $p<0.05$; Satisfaction $r=.611$, $p=0.000$) as compare to transformational. This result supports our hypothesis (H3 and H4). However, the Management-by-Exception (Passive) reported a weak negative relationship with the three scales (Extra effort; $r=-.406$, $p= 0.006$ $p<0.05$; Effectiveness $r=-.480$, $p=0.001$; Satisfaction; $r=-.486$ $p=0.001$ $p<0.05$). The management-by-exception (Passive) having negative correlation is in congruence with Thite's observation, 'the management-by-exception (MBE) generally has low correlations with effectiveness and is often negative when significant' (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Thite 1997). Our result is also in line with previous studies as noted by 'the transactional scale Contingent Reward has also been associated with effectiveness though the magnitude of the association is less than that evidenced by the transformational scales' (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996). The overall result indicate that the project team members considered their project managers' leadership behavior as more of transformational than transactional leading to more effort based on motivation of the perceived effectiveness of the leader and the satisfaction of the team.

Table 4: Correlation between Leadership style and Leadership Outcome Scales

Correlations Leadership Style and Leadership Outcome Scales				
Scales		Extra Effort	Effectiveness	Satisfaction
Laissez-faire	Pearson Correlation	-.273	-.417**	-.413**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	.005	.005
	N	44	44	44
Contingent Reward	Pearson Correlation	.527**	.586**	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44
Management-by-Exception (Passive)	Pearson Correlation	-.406**	-.480**	-.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.001	.001
	N	44	44	44
Management-by-Exception (Active)	Pearson Correlation	.207	.204	.182
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.177	.183	.236
	N	44	44	44
Intellectual Stimulation	Pearson Correlation	.767**	.731**	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44
Idealized Influence (Behavior)	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.695**	.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44
Inspirational Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.724**	.711**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44
Idealized Influence (Attributed)	Pearson Correlation	.792**	.726**	.837**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44
Individualized Consideration	Pearson Correlation	.626**	.539**	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44

Discussion And Conclusion:

Based on the literature, four hypotheses were tested in order to fully examine the aim of this study. In support of the first hypothesis (H1), table 4-5 indicates that transformational leadership correlated positively to project success. Our result is also supported by the literature (Keegan and Den Hartog 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996) in terms of the strong positive correlation of the transformational leadership to the leadership outcomes of extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction as shown in table 4-4.

Our second hypothesis stated that the transactional leadership of project manager is positively correlated to project success meaning that the exhibition of transactional leadership behavior of IT project manager can lead to project success. Our result in table 4-6 supports hypothesis number two (H2) as the overall transactional leadership behavior correlated positively to project success, however, management by exception (passive) one of the subscales of transactional leadership was noted to be negatively correlated to project success, this outcome was not a surprise as already noted in the literature that management by exception is usually negatively correlated (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Thite 1997).

The third hypothesis (H3) stated that laissez-faire leadership style of project manager is negatively correlated to project success. This hypothesis was very important and critical to this study in the sense that if the result had accepted the null hypothesis of H3 – laissez-faire leadership style would be positively correlated, the implication would be that the project can still be successful without the project manager and would have challenged the position of PMBOK and other scholars. The results as shown in table 4-7 indicates that laissez-faire correlated negatively to project success thereby supporting our hypothesis three (H3).

Our hypothesis four (H4) predicted that the relationship between project manager with transformational leadership style and project success would be stronger than in project manager with transactional. Tables 4-5 and table 4-6 shows that the correlation coefficient of transformational was stronger than in transactional, this was also evidence on the correlation level in table 4-4 against the leadership outcome. The result could lead to infer that IT project managers in Nigeria may likely be more transformational than transactional. Also there is the need for project manager as a leader in a project as reflected with negative correlation with laissez-faire leadership which could be interpreted as the less the project manager acts as a leader the more likely the project would fail.

Limitations:

The study focus was in IT projects in Nigeria and the respondents were drawn from this population as a result may not be adequate to generalized the findings to other IT project managers in other country, although some of the findings supports other similar studies conducted in other countries. Furthermore, the study did not include responses from public IT projects as a result does not account for the effect of bureaucratic tendencies of public related project or organizations. Therefore further research need to be conducted including public IT projects and organizations as well as in other regions and countries to confirm the universality of the findings in this study.

Implications:

From the study we have made contributions to leadership, leadership style as well as project success, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge especially on our chosen leadership behaviors of transformational, transactional and the laissez-faire. More importantly we have related this empirically to the Nigerian IT project environment, an area that is still in lack of literature. From our query of the various sources there was little or near absence of study on the leadership behaviors we have studied on this research in the Nigeria IT project environment, a discovery that inspires us to feel that this study have really added value to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, our study has also practical implication to the organizations, IT management, project managers and project team members especially in terms of recruiting project managers into a project. We have noted that the technical competence is good to have but should not be the sole measure for appointing a project manager, rather the ‘soft skills’ should be considered more important (Nelson 2005; Wateridge 1998). Thite (1997) agrees with this position and submitted that there is a shift now from technical skills of project manager and team members as criterion for project success to managerial, organizational, and cultural factors. It is also evident in the study that the knowledge of soft skills other than the technical competency can help project manager to adjust his style and get the best from the team, as a result of this a profile pool of project managers’ leadership characteristics and competencies can be created in the organization where various projects can be resourced.

The aspect of MLQ scales of effectiveness, extra effort and satisfaction as implored in the study will definitely come handy for organization in assessing the level of the leadership behavior against these factors, thereby creating awareness as well as the consciousness to the IT managers, project manager and would be project manager.

Further Research:

The study basically focused on the relationship between leadership styles and project success in order to establish the most suitable leadership behavior of IT project managers in Nigeria. IT project has become synonymous with failure, while scholars agree that the project manager is charged with the responsibility to ensure projects are completed successfully, thus the need to explore the contributions of the project managers as well as the effect their leadership styles have on project success. In order to ascertain this, transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles were tested and correlated with project success based on the identified success criteria of cost performance, schedule performance, quality performance, and the client satisfaction. The study design was of cross sectional meaning our contact with the population in terms of data collections was once as result did not take into consideration the challenges that the various project life-cycle may pose. This study also did not include public projects or public organization characteristics.

Future studies on IT project leadership should include more leadership styles, and respondents included from the public projects and organization and such study should be longitudinal than cross sectional in order to account for the changes that occur with each stages of the project in project life-cycle.

Conclusions:

Leadership though could be traced back to history as much as 500BC with numerous studies and regarded as the most researched concept, yet there is no clear cut agreement on what leadership is (Thite 1997; Vroom and Jago 2007). Leadership like an elephant described by a blind man has many forms. Some have considered leadership in the form of task-orientation and relationship orientation, personality, behavior, emotion, or based on situation. The proliferations of these studies have not helped with the growing styles of leadership. Our study using the MLQ instrument measured leadership style of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire based on the literature we reviewed. Our findings indicated that the IT project managers in Nigeria were more transformational than transactional. From the result it was also found that the transactional leadership style though less adopted but indicated a high mean score as well as correlated reasonably with the leadership outcome and project success.

Project success scales showed a high mean score and positive correlation indicating that the respondents ranked their projects as successful. Some of the transactional leadership scales like contingent reward and management by exception (Active) reported stronger correlations than some of the transformational leadership, and this can be attributed to the fact that leaders tend to switch between styles in order to achieve greater performance (Müller and Turner 2007; Prabhakar n.d).

From our empirical result we conclude that there is a positive relationship between leadership style and the project success, and this relationship varies from one style to another. Based on our result such relationship appeared stronger overall in transformational than any other style investigated.

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