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Leadership Style Paradigm Shift and Organisational Performance: A Case of the Nigerian Cement Industry

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Abstract

This study focused on the effect of changes in leadership styles on organisational performance in a cement manufacturing firm in Ogun State of Nigeria. A total of 385 participants were selected for the study using stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire and in-depth interview were used for data collection. Quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the in-depth interview (qualitative data) was analysed using content analysis. The two hypotheses which guided the study were tested using Chi-square test and Spearman correlation coefficient. The result of empirical test revealed a significant relationship between changes in leadership style and organisational performance in the post-acquisition context. Specifically, the result also showed a significant correlation between transformational, transactional and democratic leadership styles and organisational performance after the change of management. Restrictive leadership style was the dominant approach before the change, which was inhibitive of optimum performance,

while supportive and collaborative leadership modes which manifested and characterised the post-acquisition era were more conducive to the creation of enhanced organisational performance. The study concluded that leadership styles adopted by the organisation since the post-acquisition period allowed more involvement and greater participation of the workforce resulting into maximal overall performance in the organisation.

Keywords: Leadership style, organisational performance, institutional goal, management and work place.

Introduction

In the global workplace, swift changes in the business competitive environment and growing complexities in the management of industries and other enterprises require a new style of leadership. Besides, continuous innovation in technology, development and self-motivated nature of the workforce in organisations, all present opportunities for shifting in leadership styles (Pandit, 2005). This realignment in styles of leadership has come about as a result of a greater understanding of the needs and expectations of the people and organizations (Mullins, 2007). Thus, the gains to be made by large scale changes and improvements in leadership styles are very considerable, not only from the point of view of greater commitment and satisfaction of employees, but also from the vantage point of total organizational performance.

In this sense, Hoyle (2006) opined that a gradual shift from top-down authoritative to participative leadership style is occurring in the work place. This paradigmatic shift has further gained momentum as mergers and acquisitions have become a more strategic move of ensuring the repositioning and enhancing better performance in organisations. Consequently, the classical style of leadership, which involves a coercive approach has been given way to a more supportive and inclusive type where employees are intimately involved in work-reforms and modifications in organizations. As such, the style of leadership adopted by management often determines the level of employees' participation and the way an organization is run administratively (Uchenwangbe, 2013). By adopting the appropriate leadership style, management can impact positively on the performance of their organization.

However, leadership style is a double-edged tool in work-organizations. As a human resource management skill, it has both the constructive as well as disruptive dimensions in the workplace. Depending on the circumstance and appropriateness, leadership style can pose as a pure incentive and positive in building a performance oriented organisation. On the other hand, it can also act as a disincentive and negative backlash corroding responsibility for performance in organisations. This ambivalence

in the outcomes of leadership style compel management to be more concerned about which leadership approach suits best their organization. Given this scenario, business establishment must continuously emend their leadership styles based on organisational situations and circumstances.

Therefore, this study is of importance because it will offer valuable insight to management and also provide information on the limited empirical knowledge on the link between leadership mode paradigm and firm performance. Besides, leadership styles and organizational performance have been subject of much attention by scholars with the change-initiatives being pursued in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the cement industry within the past ten years in Nigeria. For instance, as a result of the worldwide acquisition of Blue Circles of London in 2001, Lafarge S.A. of France became a major player and the majority shareholder in some of the market leaders in the cement industry within the organised private sector in the country. Presently, Lafarge holds a leadership position in the Nigerian cement industry and has fully integrated the acquisitioned companies into the Lafarge humanist culture, culminating into changes in management and leadership styles.

However, empirical validation in operations in the cement industry across the country has been scanty or rather non-existent. Thus, a gap exists in the research in this area of strategic importance to the nation's economy. This is surprising when one considers the importance of the cement industry, that apart from the oil sector, the industry is seen as the one of the most powerful engine of growth for necessary economic development in the country that requires the necessary attention by all sundry as to how it performs. The present study, therefore aims to examine the link between changes in leadership styles and organizational performance in a cement production firm in Nigeria. Specifically, it identifies and compares the various leadership styles that have been adopted in the running of the selected cement production firm in pre and post-acquisition context and investigates the effect of changes in leadership styles on organisational performance in the post – acquisition context.

Review of Literature

In the literature, the concept of managerial leadership style has been defined as the pattern of behaviour engaged by the leader / manager when dealing with employees (Gono and Gallo, 2013; Kurfi, 2009; and Omolayo, 2007). This implies the general manner, outlook, attitude and demeanour of management in dealing with employees in order to ensure optimum performance in work-organizations. Ideally, it is a controllable behavioural factor which influences employees work-related attitudes towards goals. In this perspective, leadership style is viewed as the approach and manner of providing direction for implementing plans and motivating

subordinates to achieve institutional goals and objectives (Bamisaye, 2005). Its use in the work–environment is largely determined by the personal values, beliefs and attributes of manager.

Guided by the literature, three basic leadership styles have been identified in the work-place, which are autocratic, laissez-faire and democratic types (Lewin, Lippit and White, 1939; Bamisaiye, 2005; and Gono and Gallo, 2013). However, studies in organisational dynamics and behaviours have shown that none of these styles of leadership is generally the best in the work environment (Carse, and Claudel, 2011; Omolayo, 2007; Ogundele, 2005; and Ogunbameru, 2004). The three types of leadership styles involve very different kinds of responses to organizational problems. Any given one or any combination may prove appropriate in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives depending on the organizational situations (Awonusi, 2006).

Furthermore, a review of literature and research findings regarding leadership styles has revealed additional categories such as transactional and transformational leadership styles in business organisations ((Boehunke, Bontis, Distefano and Distefano (2003); and Humphreys and Einstein, 2003). Transactional leadership style helps organisations to achieve their current objectives by linking job performance to value rewards and ensuring that employees have the resources needed to get the job done (Northhouse, 2010). Similarly, transformational leadership style shows a high level of concern for people and also facilitates multiple level of performance in response to the need of the changing work environment. Subsumed in this type of leadership style are assorted kinds of behavioural components such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Keller, 2006).

Empirical studies have also suggested that leadership style can facilitate the improvement of performance and influence both the employees and organizational outcomes (Koech, and Namusongo, 2012, Boehlije and Bruce, 2007; and Ogunlana and Limisila, 2007). Furthermore, Worall (2004) surveyed 20 organizations in the Energy sector of U.K and found that some of the organizations where management has adopted restrictive leadership style were not conducive to the creation of high organizational performance. In organizations, where supportive leadership style was used, corporate performance was found to be high.

Research studies have further established the importance and appropriateness of both the transactional and transformational leadership styles in the achievement of organizational goals (Chen, Beck and Amos, 2005; Ogunlana and Limsila, 2007; and Zhu, Chew and Spangler, 2005). Exploring the importance of leadership style in the Palestinian industrial sector, As – Sadegh and Khary (2006) reiterated that

transactional leadership style was more frequent in use than transformational leadership style. This finding however, contrasted with that of Robbins (2003) who found that employee turn-over rate is less with transformational leadership style, than with that of transactional leadership approach. From this stand point, Liu, Fellow and Fang (2003) submitted that improving the employee working situation, fulfilling their needs and helping them to perform better are positively related to transformational leadership style.

In sum, the available literature reviewed so far, indicated lack of consensus and diverse findings regarding the link between leadership styles and organisational performance in the work-place. Also, none of the empirical studies have been conducted in Nigeria, especially in the cement production manufacturing organization. Hence, the present study which is primary and empirical is fully justified.

Study Hypotheses

Based on the broad objective of the study and comprehensive review of the literature, the two hypotheses formulated in null form and tested for the purpose of the study are stated here-under:

- Ho₁ – There is no significant relationship between changes in leadership style and organisational performance in post-acquisition context.
- Ho₂ – There is no significant relationship between different leadership styles (Autocratic, Laizzez-faire, democratic, transactional and transformational) and organisational performance in post-acquisition context.

Methodology

Research Design, Population and Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Participants were drawn from a purposively selected cement production firm in Nigeria, with a total population of 725 employees. The choice of the organization was influenced by its position, as the being cement market and industry leader in Nigeria, and has also been involved in acquisition and change of management which had brought together different corporate cultures and leadership styles for over 5 years. Using an appropriate statistical formula for sample selection, stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select 400 respondents. The basic criteria for inclusion in the sample were employee cadre and organizational tenure.

Research Instruments

The research instruments employed for the study were questionnaire and in-depth interview. A Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Avolvo and Bass (2006) was adapted for the survey. The MLQ was employed to seek information on retrospective and prospective issues related to leadership styles and organisational performance. The questionnaire consisted of two sections A and B. Section A dealt with the bio – graphical details of the respondents. Section B contained 40 questions – items relating to the study objectives. The independent variables are autocratic, Laissez – Faire, democratic, transactional and transformational leadership styles. The dependent variable, organizational performance was measured with Macpherson and Pabari (2004) model of assessment of organisational performance using organisational effectiveness, financial viability, customer delight, employee commitment and job satisfaction. A set of Likert scale was used to measure pertinent constructs in the questionnaire. The in-depth interview was conducted using an unstructured format to enable respondents give more informative answers.

Validity and Reliability

Well validation of the questionnaire was ensured through Test Re-Test method with 40 employees of a related cement organization. Using Cronbach alpha at 0.05 level, the reliability coefficient of the variables ranged from 0.793 to 0.875, reflecting appropriate adequacy and adjudging the questionnaire as valid and reliable.

Data Sources

Quantitative data were sourced through the use of questionnaire. The researcher self-administered 400 copies of questionnaire, out of which 385 were retrieved and useable for analysis with a response rate of 96.25%. Qualitative data were collected using indepth interview, with key informants purposively selected from the research sample.

Data Analysis

Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test, and Spearman Correlation Co-efficient were used to analyse the link between leadership styles and organizational performance at 0.05 alpha level. Content analysis was utilized in interpreting the outcome of the in-depth interview.

Findings of the Study

Findings on the socio–demographic characteristics of the respondents show that their mean age is 38.5 with a standard deviation of 7.2 years. This finding

suggests that majority of the respondents are relatively middle aged adults. The gender distribution of respondents shows a disproportionate representation where male constituted 81.5% of the sample population, while female accounted for only (18.5%) in the research study. This presents a gender disparity of ratio of more than 4:1 across the gender group skewed in favour of males. This finding is not unconnected with the culture of work and Health and Safety (HS) policy in the organization. Cement industries worldwide are classified among developmental projects with high hazardous effect on women.

On marital status, more than eight (8) out of ten (10) respondents, that is (88.6%) were married, while 11.4% were either single, separated or divorced from their spouses. This is somehow significant, given the perception in the Nigerian society that being married often confers leadership responsibilities on individuals, with implications on work – related attitudes and behaviours in organizations. A significant proportion, that is (72.2%) of the respondents possessed college diploma and above while the remaining (27.8%) had low educational status. Their average organisational tenure is 10.3 years, with a standard deviation of 3.5years. This implies that almost two – thirds that is (64.2%) of the respondents had been in the service of the selected cement firm for 10 years and above. The respondents had also been in their current positions for an average of 5.5 years, with a standard deviation of 1.2years. The relative placement of employee in the organizational hierarchy in terms of job rank was also enumerated. Majority (83.1%) of the respondents were in the non- managerial, while the rest (16.9%) were in the management cadre. This indicates that a bulk of the proportion of the respondents was in the non-managerial cadre.

As a prelude to the main focus of the study, the analysis first ascertained the types of leadership style that were adopted in the running of the organization in pre and post-acquisition context. This was done as a precursor for establishing the effect of changes in leadership styles on organizational performance. Data presented in Table 1 indicates that a combination of leadership styles was in use in pre-acquisition period. The most dominant type was autocratic leadership style (51.3%) and next to it was democratic leadership style (22.3%). Worthy of note is that only negligible traces of Laissez-faire leadership style were exhibited (10.6%). Also, barely used in the pre-acquisition period were transactional leadership style (9.6%) and transformational leadership style (6.2%).

However, a significant finding in the post-acquisition era is that more than six (6) out of ten (10) respondents, that (62.1%) of the respondents affirmed transformational leadership style as the dominant leadership approach exhibited in the running of the organization, followed by transactional leadership style (20.0%) and democratic leadership (14.3%). The organization rarely adopted autocratic and laissez-faire

leadership which were (2.3% and 1.3%) respectively in the running of the organisation in the post-acquisition period.

Table 1: Leadership Styles Adopted by the Organization in Pre and Post Acquisition Context

Types of Leadership Style	N = 385			
	Pre-Acquisition		Post – Acquisition	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Autocratic and bureaucratic	197	51.3	9	2.3
Laissez – Faire	41	10.6	5	1.3
Democratic	86	22.3	55	14.3
Transactional	37	9.6	77	20.0
Transformational	24	6.2	239	62.1

Source: Field survey, 2014

The responses abstracted from the series of interviews across the company lend credence to the quantitative result. Some of the extracts are thus presented:

Employee participation was not widely encouraged in the organization before the change of management. All policy-decisions emanated from the top. The company was more of being production centered, than being employee and customer focused. The style of leadership in pre-acquisition period was too restrictive and affected our performance. Male – Manager (Aged, 45)

“The present leadership style in the post-acquisition period has eliminated almost all ambiguities in the former system. There is now greater involvement in the discharge of task responsibilities. Support and recognition are also given to employees and these enhance their job satisfaction and commitment to duty. Employees are continuously involved in high performance programmes such as “project optima”, “new dawn” and “deliver to the light”, which resulted in increased organizational performance”.

Female – Manager (Aged, 38)

The picture which emerged from these responses indicated that with the change in leadership styles in post – acquisition period, employees were more enthusiastic, willing to work above and beyond contract resulting in enhanced corporate performance.

Test of Hypothesis

The first hypothesis was subjected to non-parametric chi-square statistical test analysis. Data presented in Table 2 shows that X^2 calculated value of 78.72 is greater than X^2 critical value of 35.0 at 0.05 level of significance. This result rejects the null hypothesis (H_{01}) that changes in leadership styles do not have significant effect on organisational performance in post- acquisition context and accepts the alternative hypothesis.

Table 2: Chi-square showing relationship between changes in Leadership style and Organizational Performance in Post – Acquisition Context

N	Critical Value	X^2 Calculated Value	Df	P
385	35.0	78.72	15	<.000

$$X^2=78.72, Df = 15, p(0.000) < 0.05$$

The second hypothesis for the study stated that “there is a significant relationship between different leadership styles (autocratic, laissez-faire, democratic, transactional and transformational) and organizational performance in post – acquisition context. In order to test the hypothesis, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient methods was utilized in examining the relationship between the different leadership styles and organizational performance. The cut-off strength of relationship (r) in the correlation is 0.450 (45.0%) while less <45% is regarded as weak strength of relationship and not significant (ns). Data in Table 3 indicates that there was a strong and significant correlation between transformational leadership styles and organisational performance ($r=0.726$, $p<0.000$). Similarly, the results also revealed strong strength of relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational performance ($r=0.612$, $p<0.001$).

Furthermore, study finding also shows a significant correlation between democratic leadership style and organizational performance ($r=0.532$, $p<0.005$). Conversely, however, study data portrays that there was negative and non-significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and organizational performance ($r=0.345$, $p>0.005$) and autocratic style and organizational performance ($r=0.316$, $p>0.005$).

In the light of the outcome of results, it is safe to conclude that our hypothesis 2 provides empirical support for only three (3) leadership style construct (Transformational, Transactional and Democratic leadership styles and cast doubts on two (2), (laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles).

Table – The matrix of correlation between different leadership styles and organisational performance in post-acquisition context

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE	TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE	TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE	DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE	LASSEIZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP	AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE	
					0.226	AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE
				0.305 *	0.131	
				0.212	0.266	LASSEIZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP
			0.545	0.332	0.106	
			0.004	0.112 **	0.352 **	DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE
		0.635 *	0.572 **	0.314	0.022	
		0.000	0.003	0.006	0.375	TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE
		0.612	0.515	0.027	0.102	
		0.001	0.002	0.103	0.386	TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE
0.220 *	0.726 *	0.612 *	0.532 *	0.345 **	0.112	
0.006	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.213	0.316	ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE
					0.221	

* Significant correlation at the level of 0.05
 ** Significant correlation at the level of 0.01

Discussion of Findings

This paper contributed to the understanding of the link between changes in leadership styles and organizational performance. It also gives insight to the various styles of leadership that could be adapted to suit different situations in the workplace, in the bid to making a more competitive and performance oriented organization. Our findings revealed that appropriate leadership modes are of utmost importance in stimulating employee work-related attitudes and behaviours in order to enhance organisational performance. Empirical evidence from the study did confirm that a combination of leadership styles was being used in both pre and post-acquisition context in the organization. This finding is in line with the view of McGuire (2005), that management can hardly hold on to a single leadership style in the bid to enhancing performance in business organizations. Hence, the right leadership style determines the extent to which a manager constantly and progressively leads and directs subordinates towards the achievement of organisational goals.

Specifically, our findings showed that autocratic leadership style and less of democratic leadership approach were the dominant styles adopted in the running of the organization before acquisition and change of ownership. Supportive and collaborative leadership modes such as transformational and transactional leadership styles which manifested in post-acquisition era were found to be more effective in achieving higher level of performance in the organization. These findings bore semblance to the results of earlier study conducted by Liu, Fellow and Fang (2003) which found that improving the employees working situation, fulfilling their needs and helping them to perform better are positively related to transformational leadership style. Our analysis is thus, indicative that by the adoption of appropriate model of leadership style, management could affect positively on organisational performance. In essence, good leadership styles enhance employee morale and have positive impact on the growth of organizations (Uchenwamgbe, 2013).

Another salient finding in the study is that contemporary leadership model such as transformational and transactional leadership styles adopted in the running of the organization in post-acquisition period were significant predictors of organizational performance. This result is consistent and in harmony with finding of prior studies carried out by Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa and Nwankere, (2011); and Zhu, and Chew and Spangler, (2005). Thus, the continuous use of effective style of leadership often facilitates the extent to which work-organisation reaches its desired goals and objectives (Ogunbameru, 2004). Hence, management must constantly adjust their leadership styles to the situational circumstances as well as the people being led in their organization.

As for the first hypothesis, finding revealed that there was a significant relationship between changes in leadership style and organization performance. This result corroborates with that of Uchewamgbe (2013); Koech and Namusongo (2012); Thamrin (2012) and Elenkov (2002), that leadership style is a necessary pre-requisite for effective accomplishment of organisational goals and objectives. Our analysis therefore suggests that appropriate leadership style often impact on organizational performance or act a catalyst for other factors that result in higher performance in work-organizations.

In the second hypothesis, our findings were in harmony with the assertion of Tarabishy, Solomon, Fernald and sashkin (2005), that leaders and their leadership style influence both their subordinate and organisational outcome. The test of our hypothesis, confirmed a statistically significant determinate relationship between transformational, transactional and democratic leadership style and organizational performance. However, the statistical determinate relationship between laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles was negative and non-significant in the post-acquisition period. Hence, the results offered significant empirical support for the general consensus on transformational and transactional leadership styles that they create and sustain a context which maximizes human and organizational capabilities in the workplace. This supports the view of Judge and Picollo (2004), that transformational and transactional leadership styles create an environment of optima performance by articulating a compelling vision in the enhancement of organizational performance. They also demonstrate an elixir of human understanding by facilitating multiple level of performance in response to the needs of the changing work environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the influence of changes in leadership styles on organizational performance in a cement production firm. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focusing on organizational performance and exemplifying leadership style as an important predictor of organizational performance. Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that management in organizations can hardly hold on to a single leadership style in the bid to enhancing performance, but a realignment of combination of styles. What management thus require is flexibility to adopt the appropriate leadership mode to vary behaviours according to the needs of the varying situations in work-organizations. Relatedly, different leadership styles affect organizational performance in different ways. Organizational success in achieving goals and objectives depends on the extent to which management has adopted for use the appropriate leadership styles. This is because each manager's style of leadership has an important bearing on how effectively the organization achieves its desired goals and objectives. However, the analysis has shown transformational and

transactional leadership modes to be non-opposing and significant predictors of organizational performance unlike the laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles which corrode responsibility for optimum organisations.

The study recommends that shift in leadership styles orientation in business organisations should continually emphasis pro-activeness, supportiveness and occasional use of unilateral power to issue directive and obtain compliance in order to ensure optimum organizational performance. The maintenance and sustenance of collaborative and situational leadership styles should be seen as the prerequisite for effect accomplishment of organisational goals and objectives. Management should also endeavour to involve employees at all levels of organizational hierarchy in the planning process of institutional goals as the best practice of achieving and actualizing synergy in the organizational members. Adopting the appropriate leadership style increasingly espouses employee empowerment in work-organisations and this should be intensified for pushing responsibilities down the lower cadre in order to enhance corporate performance. Organisations should also practice a more active and effective communication net flow in such a way that employees are constantly carried along and briefed in advance of impending changes which may affect their relationship with management and the discharge of their onerous responsibilities for the enhancement of corporate performance.

However, given our current results, we are wary of making broad generalizations in this study for two obvious reasons. First is the restrictive nature of this study to the cement industry and a manufacturing private sector organisation. The findings may not be applicable to organizations in the public sector or in sectors other than the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. Second is the size of our sample, which is not large enough and also posed a threat to the generalisability of the study. Our final thesis is that organizational performance is a multi-dimensional construct and it will be almost impossible to derive a single criterion which will lead to enhanced organizational performance. Organizational performance is determinate exclusively on the contingencies facing an organization, but the absence of appropriate leadership style makes its accomplishment tenuous in any business establishment.

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