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The Impact of Leadership on Employee Performance in Construction: A Case Study of BELTEI Construction Company, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

By Loeung

loeungbee@gmail.com

PhD in Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration, BELTEI International University, Cambodia

ABSTRACT

Leaders in Cambodia's construction business face obstacles that demand them to employ their leadership style in guiding personnel to operate at high performance levels. This study aims to investigate the impact of different leadership styles on employees' performances at one private construction company in Cambodia. Design/Methodology/approach: Using convenience sampling, 152 valid structured questionnaires for the quantitative study and 30 unstructured questionnaires for the qualitative study were acquired following distribution. This study used a mixed methods research design. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for the quantitative analysis of the data. The inferential statistics of the data were presented using regression analysis and Pearson's correlation to explain both relationships and effects in accordance with the study assumptions. Text analysis using theme analysis for qualitative data. The study found a significant positive correlation between employee performance and four leadership styles (transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic) at a private construction company in Cambodia. Autocratic leadership had the lowest standard error and highest adjusted R-square, explaining the most variance in employee performance. The study found that construction workers use a variety of leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, democratic, and autocratic, to manage and resolve issues. Autocratic leadership has the highest correlation with employee performance, followed by democratic, transactional, and transformational styles. This hybrid and mixed leadership styles are used to ensure worker efficiency and safety. The study's value lies in its demonstration of how to apply successful leadership styles to improve employee performance, hence raising productivity and maintaining an inventive work atmosphere.

Keywords: *Autocratic, Democratic, Leadership, Transactional, Transformational*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a process of influence that may pose any positive or negative impact on employees' behavior and overall performance (Wyllie, 2020). According to Gandolfi & Stone (2018) and Reza (2019), leadership is an essential concept that is primarily directed at people; it is the process of persuading individuals to achieve organizational goals; so, companies are worried about the influence of their leadership styles on employee performance.

Collective leadership is one of several different leadership theories that believe authority is distributed horizontally among group members. It is recommended that when people establish collective leadership identities, they connect with others across multiple boundaries, including possibilities that are functional, hierarchical, or geographical (Lau et al., 2020). Kabeyi (2018) has claimed that leadership style is merely a leader's approach of offering instructions for plan implementation while also pushing individuals to attain organizational goals. The idea running across the tenets is that various leaders may use different leadership styles.

Supervisory leadership styles and their influence on the workplace happiness of construction workers in the United Arab Emirates, as well as the link between perceived leadership styles, employee contentment, and organizational performance, have been brought up by Careem (2018). According to Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi (2019), an employee's performance represents the totality of their efforts and contributions to the company, as well as the status of the completed project. Different positions within the company must engage in various work tasks.

Achunguh (2020) has noted that the link between leadership style and employee performance has been investigated in several nations, with the findings revealing a tight association between the two. Employee performance is critical for firms to accomplish their goals. Leadership styles also play an important part in the organization's overall efficacy and efficiency, as well as employee performance. As a result, it is natural to expect that leadership styles have a considerable impact on employee performance, even if the nature of the relationship varies by country or firm. The research findings also suggest that the quality of leadership has a direct relationship with the achievement of corporate goals. The most frequent metric used to assess a leader's quality is how much influence the leader has over his or her subordinates to improve their performance and achieve overall corporate goals.

According to Ali Larik & Karim Lashari (2022), the employee's total performance comprises the completion of the defined obligations. Set time for assembly personnel competency, job efficiency, and performance. Organizations of all sorts require a strong leadership style that may improve overall employee performance. Non-governmental organizations confront a variety of challenges, including passive innovation, low productivity, and inability to meet overall performance objectives. This sort of difficulty occurs as a result of a certain

leadership style's strategic involvement, which transforms specific situations into expectations (Fadhillah et al., 2023). Due to imminent issues, this has become an issue that is still affecting employees's overall performance. That is why looking at a pleasant Leadership style that includes surveys may improve a person's overall performance. Competent employers are said to originate with commercial company sponsors or leaders. The strong leadership approach is also built on cutting-edge technology. Employees also think they could require a cardiac pacemaker and they must understand that they are no longer at their height. A leader must be powerful. As a result, they require a strong leader who can bring society closer to adapting and increasing overall efficiency. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to look at how different leadership styles affect employee performance in Cambodian construction, as well as figuring out whether there is a positive impact of autocratic, democratic, transformational and transactional leadership on employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership, the retention of considerable decision-making authority and power by a manager has piqued the interest of many research investigating its influence on employee performance in diverse organizational contexts. While research conducted by Dolly C. & Nonyelum P. (2018) implies that authoritarian leadership has a detrimental influence on employees performance, another research by Bolarinwa et al. (2023) demonstrate that autocratic leadership styles might cause a drop in workers' job performance. Furthermore, Yamassake et al. (2021) revealed that autocratic leadership had a detrimental influence on employee performance indicators.

Despite the negative consequences of autocratic leadership, several research have looked at the potential positive impacts of autocratic leadership on employee behavior. For example, authoritarian leadership has been found to be positively connected with regularity in work behaviors in some settings (Makhdoom et al., 2021). However, the broad agreement in the research points to authoritarian leadership having a negative impact on staff performance.

Democratic

Democratic leadership may improve employee performance by encouraging organizational commitment, problem-solving abilities, and work happiness, all of which are important variables in overall performance (Mobarak Karim et al., 2023). Moreover, studies conducted by Bolarinwa et al. (2023) proved that there is a direct association between democratic leadership styles and improved work performance, with employees doing 54.3% better when this leadership style is introduced. This emphasizes the relevance of leadership styles that include people in decision-making and encourage teamwork.

Democratic leadership has been investigated in a variety of settings to determine its influence on employee performance. Research at construction firms in Edo State, Nigeria, found that workplace democracy aspects such as justice and accountability significantly affect employee productivity, highlighting the need of management commitment and good training programs (Odiwo et al., 2022). Similarly, studies in businesses such as PT Medan Industry Area (Persero) and PT AEL Indonesia demonstrated that democratic leadership styles significantly enhance employee performance, leading to higher motivation and improved working conditions (Andrysyah et al., 2020; Salsabila & Hetami, 2022). Furthermore, research carried out by Kirana et al. (2023) and Priyagung & Wening (2020) revealed that democratic leadership favorably increases motivation, which in turn boosts employee performance, suggesting a mediation function of motivation in this relationship. These findings together indicate that democratic leadership is critical in determining employee performance outcomes in the construction sector and beyond.

Iqbal et al. (2015) has claimed that democratic leaders make no ideas but seek the opinions of others. This leadership encourages all team members to engage in making final decisions and developing the overall process to achieve their objectives. One of the primary advantages of democratic leadership style is that the process promotes the emergence of some extra leaders who may significantly serve the organization and have active participation on the part of everyone in the team (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Democratic leaders encourage and welcome team members to have a key part in the final decision-making process, but the ultimate authority rests in the hands of leaders, who direct the team on what to do and how to accomplish it, and workers share their views, experience, and recommendations (Skogstad et al., 2014). Employees are participating in the decision-making process in the framework of democratic leadership, but their power in the process is maintained, and the leader has the last say following employee debate during every meeting or brainstorming session (Hunitie, 2016).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has sparked widespread interest in the construction sector owing to its potential influence on staff performance. According to research, transformational leadership improves a variety of workforce outcomes in construction contexts. For example, Jiang et al. (2017) studied the influence of transformative leadership on employee sustainable performance, emphasizing the mediating function of corporate citizenship behavior. Meanwhile, Grill et al. (2017) have discovered a favorable relationship between construction site managers' transformational leadership conduct and employees' safety-related work behavior. Additionally, Grill et al. (2017) has underlined the need of transformational leadership in enhancing workplace safety on construction sites. Moreover, Potter et al. (2018) has discovered a relationship between emotional intelligence and

transformational leadership characteristics in construction project managers, showing a beneficial influence success. Furthermore, A. Mahfouz et al. (2020) has emphasized the mediating function of employee commitment in the link between transformational leadership style and employee performance, emphasizing the necessity of commitment in improving job performance, especially in the construction sector.

Davis & Thilagaraj (2022) defined that transformational leader cognizant of the demands of the business and its employees while also stimulating and meeting a person's higher-level requirements. A transformational leader inspires others to collaborate to achieve larger goals in order to influence positive change in the workplace. Additionally, Deveshwar & Aneja (2014) emphasized four characteristics of a transformational leader as follows:

1. **Inspirational Motivation:** Inspirational and motivating leaders are those that push their employees in their jobs and establish a clear vision for attaining goals and moving forward by increasing workplace efficiency.
2. **Consideration for individuals:** The leader communicates with his or her subordinates in line with their individual characteristics and abilities. Individuals receive individualized attention from the leader in order to create healthy connections by providing new learning opportunities that align with their interests and talents.
3. **Intellectual stimulation:** Leaders encourage their subordinates to try to instill excitement and innovation in their own subordinates by modifying their own approaches and options. The leader's major goal is to encourage the free flow of ideas and imaginations so that their followers and subordinates can try new techniques and approaches.
4. **Idealized influence:** Leaders set a good example for their followers by being polite. They value, respect, and trust their subordinates. They prioritize their followers' needs before their own and refrain from using power for personal benefit.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership refers to a dynamic interchange between a leader and their followers. The leader establishes the goals to be reached and oversees the performance of the followers. Leaders decide on the incentives that will be awarded when followers' expectations are realized. The transaction is intended to promote followers' compliance in performing their commitments to the organization (Keskes, 2014).

Effective leadership is a critical component of organizational management since it has a substantial influence on employee behavior and performance. Transactional leadership is a prominent leadership style in company that focuses on offering incentives and punishments to drive people to achieve specified goals (Thivaashini Selvarajah et al., 2024).

Reid & Dold (2018) had developed the principles of transactional leadership. They defined transactional leadership as a managerial approach in which authority and subordinates reach agreements. Those in authority and workers engage in transactions for the exchange of valuables, with the organization benefiting from the employees' labor and loyalty, and the employees benefiting from salary, other emoluments, and the usage of organizational resources. In transactional leadership, the parties involved must keep their promises, which necessitates honesty, fairness, and responsibility. Transactional theory is founded on the idea that followers require structure and a directing attitude in order to function successfully.

The phrase "employee performance" refers to an employee's work quality when carrying out their assigned activities and obtaining the intended results within the timeframes specified. It entails achieving corporate objectives while functioning within legal frameworks and following moral and ethical standards (Felgate, 2020). As a result, there is a significant relationship between individual performance and institutional achievement, with the former having a direct impact on the latter. Employee performance acts as an indicator of workplace happiness, with high performers considerably improving work output quality.

Coaching leadership is a type of leadership in which the leader believes in coaching and guiding their subordinates. The leader serves as a teacher and oversees the performance of employees. The leader can operate in a variety of circumstances, and the primary goal is to increase employee performance in order to secure organizational success. The leader helps people enhance their talents by encouraging and inspiring them (Wang et al., 2014). Furthermore, by raising their morale, they would be able to work harder and achieve greater results.

Previous research indicates that autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, and transformational and transactional leadership styles have influenced on the organization, hence the hypothesis in this research has been stated as follows:

- H₁ : The autocratic leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance in construction in Cambodia.
- H₂ : The democratic leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance in construction in Cambodia.
- H₃ : The transformational leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance in construction in Cambodia.
- H₄ : The transactional leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance in construction in Cambodia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are only four variables such as Autocratic, Democratic, Transformational, and Transactional leadership styles are used as the tools for this study. Thus, the researcher has proposed the new conceptual framework as in Figure 1.

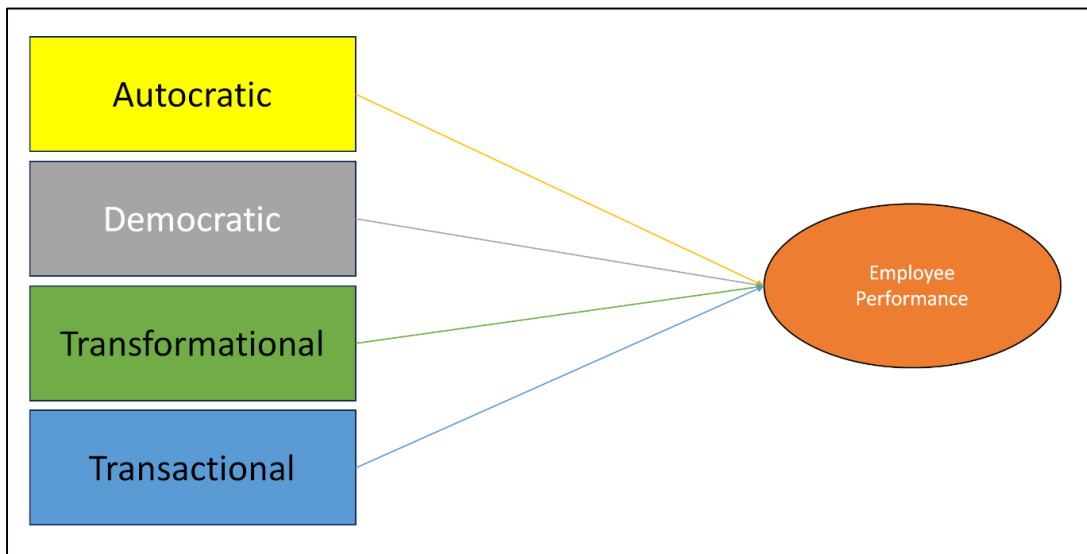


Figure 1. Proposing Model

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

The study used a survey research design. This design was quantitative, allowing for both descriptive and inferential analysis. Convenience sampling of respondents was utilized to guarantee that only employees found at their jobs were included in the study.

The survey included leaders, managers, engineers, architects, and construction workers from Cambodian construction company. The actual population is unknown. A researcher adopted a well-constructed and validated questionnaire, and the scale used to assess leadership styles was the multifactor leadership questionnaire created by Batista-Foguet et al. (2021) to collect information on respondents' ages, genders, academic levels, incomes, and positions in the organization, which was important in determining the respondent's demographics. The independent variables include authoritarian, democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles.

It was difficult to study the entire population. For this reason, the researcher adopted a convenience random selection approach. Convenience sampling is a method of choosing participants from the target population based on ease of access. As a result, the target number of respondents for this survey was 160 employees. The exact number of participants was 152.

The study's dependability was guaranteed by conducting a pilot test. All variables have Cronbach's alpha values over 0.7, which is deemed acceptable (Bonett & Wright, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the results of the analysis of employee performance. The statement 'How do you rate your productivity on the job?' had the highest mean

and S.D of 3.53 and 0.92 respectively. The researcher observed from these statistics that the average staff agrees with the statement. This is followed by the statement ‘How do your rate quality of your performance?’ which has a mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.94, indicating that the average response of the staff is in agreement of the statement. The next followed by the statement ‘How do you rate the performance of yourself at your job compared with your peer doing the same kinds of work?’ which has a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 0.96, indicating that the average response of the staff is in agreement of the statement. The last statement ‘How do you rate the performance of your peers at their jobs compared with yourself doing the same kind of work?’ which has a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.878, indicating that the average response of the staff is in agreement of the statement.

Overall, employee’s performance with 4 statements used in assessing it has a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.75. With these results, further analysis will be carried out in the section to come to conclude whether employee performance is affected by the perception of the employee on the leadership style exhibited by their immediate supervisor.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
How do your rate quality of your performance?	152	1	5	3.51	0.949
How do you rate your productivity on the job?	152	1	5	3.53	0.927
How do you rate the performance of your peers at their jobs compared with yourself doing the same kind of work?	152	1	5	3.39	0.878
How do you rate the performance of yourself at your job compared with your peer doing the same kinds of work?	152	1	5	3.43	0.961
Employee's Performance (overall)	152	1	5	3.4605	0.75924
Valid N (list wise)	152				

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

Multiple Regression Analysis

This table presents us with figures which describe the way leadership style predicts employee’s performance. In order to interpret this table, the researcher is concerned with the standardized Beta coefficient which is 0.672 (given $p < 0.05$) and this figure suggests that with every increase of one standard deviation in transformational leadership, staffs will have their performance increase by 67.2%.

The transactional leadership style has a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.699 ($p < 0.05$) which suggests that for every unit increase in the standard deviation of transformational leadership, staffs will have their staffs increase by 69.9%.

The autocratic leadership style has a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.734 ($p > 0.05$) which suggests that for every unit decrease in the standard deviation of autocratic leadership, staffs will have their staffs decrease by 73.4%.

This table also shows that the democratic style of leadership with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.699 ($p < 0.05$) affects the performance of staff positively by 69.9% when one unit of the standard deviation of democratic leadership is added.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Leadership styles on Employee Performance

Coefficient							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant) Autocratic	.995 .711	.191 .054	.734	5.211 13.234	.000 .000	1.000	1.000
(Constant) Democratic	1.171 .643	.196 .054	.699	5.966 11.970	.000 .000	1.000	1.000
(Constant) Transformational	1.337 .591	.197 .053	.672	6.802 11.108	.000 .000	1.000	1.000
(Constant) Transactional	.899 .705	.219 .059	.699	4.108 11.959	.000 .000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

All four leadership styles (transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic) have a statistically significant positive relationship with employee performance. This means that higher scores on these leadership styles are associated with higher employee performance ratings.

Based on the standardized coefficients, autocratic leadership appears to have the strongest association with employee performance, followed by transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and then democratic leadership.

Transactional leadership was also found to be significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of employee performance and overall performance. The autocratic style of leadership had a significant and positive correlation with all dimensions of employee performance as well as overall. For democratic leadership was also found to be significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of employee performance and overall performance. Lastly, transformational leadership also had a significant positive correlation with dimensions of employee performance and employee performance as a whole.

Autocratic and democratic styles of leadership, all significantly affected employee performance in a positive way. The transformational and transactional leadership style had a significant but slightly impact on employee performance. Any construction company has a set of goals and objectives they wish to achieve and in order to attain that, the management needs to exhibit characteristics of leadership that will bring out the best in their staff. What this study has shown us are the different ways staffs react to different types of leadership styles in the way they perform their duties. What the researcher would recommend to the management of the construction company is to use this research to know which leadership style staffs respond to the most and apply more of that leadership style, this can also help to develop future strategies and also accomplish construction company goals through the development of leadership behavior on the part of the leader/manager. Based on the results acquired from this study, the researcher recommends as following:

Transformational leadership is the most suitable form of leadership to be exhibited by the leader/manager/director due to the fact that the staff responded more favourably to transformational leadership style when compared to other mentioned styles of leadership employee performance was tested against. The leader/manager needs to be vigilante and pay attention to the things or factors that affect the performance of the staff and exploit it to help in the completion of construction company goals.

Exhibiting more of the characteristics of a transformational leader, especially the idealized influence trait of a transformational leader. The leader/manager should look beyond their own self-interest and connect to their staff by promoting their faith in them and this would in turn surely increase employee performance.

Exhibition of an autocratic style of leadership as the results from this study show positivity impacts the performance of employee and therefore should not be employed by the leader/manager who intends to bring the best out of their staff. The leader/manager should clarify construction company standards and goals to the staff and not wait for a problem to arise before tackling it. The best leaders anticipate and predict to the best of their ability and experience to avoid not reaching certain

construction company goals and objectives. Also, in a lot of cases, employees tend to look forward to the rewards they will be getting for the work they have done and they tend to do no more than is needed to achieve the minimum objective or quota. The researcher's recommendation to employees in regard to this sense is to be more innovative in the place of work, provided that the management allows for innovation among employees.

Leaders should be aware of what is important for the subordinates and the construction company as a whole and encourage the employees to see the opportunities and challenges around them creatively. The leader/manager should also have their own visions and development plans for followers, working in groups and champion team work spirit. The leader/manager should have a sense of innovation and also encourage followers to seek more opportunities and possibilities, not just achieve performance within expectations.

The leader/manager should understand the values of the followers and try to build their departmental/ unit's strategies, plans, processes, and practices that will likely improve the wellbeing of employees. Respect for the individual is also very key to building a positive relationship between leaders and employees. Employees prefer to idealize attributes of leadership behaviors from their supervisor because it can increase their level of performance. Employees would like to see more idealized attributes in their leader/manager; therefore, the leader/manager should act to promote faith in their subordinates. They should connect with the working groups and the individuals beyond self-interest. A sense of confidence and power for the workload should be displayed.

The leader/manager autocratic leadership style will increase employee performance. So, they should try to avoid this type of leadership style. Contrarily, the leader/manager should clarify expectations and provide goals and standards to be achieved for the followers. They should not wait until the problems become more serious and then act/ take action they should monitor performance on a timely basis. Whenever a problem arises, the leader/manager should try to intervene in the issues as soon as possible.

The leader/manager should respond to urgent questions and make decisions promptly and precisely. They should not be afraid of getting involved in problem-solving. Regarding the results of correlation analysis, it indicated that democratic leadership, Laissez-fair leadership, and autocratic leadership all have significant correlations with staff performance. democratic leadership had positive correlations with employee productivity, quality, and overall performance.

Construction company can develop certain training programs or mentor professionals for the leader/manager/director and leaders. Professionals and trainers can use the results from the current study to develop training programs that support leadership development. Construction company can provide leadership training programs or interventions to improve the leader/manager leadership. The leadership training program can be designed based on employee needs and construction

company needs to achieve the very best from such particular programs. And also, psychological interventions are needed to clarify for the employees the relationship with the leader/manager, and the impacts of leadership styles on loyalty employee performance, including the leader's daily practice, leadership behaviors, and the importance of feedback.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The study found that all four leadership styles—transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic—positively impact employee performance. Autocratic leadership had the strongest association with performance, followed by transformational, transactional, and then democratic leadership. Each style significantly and positively correlated with various dimensions of employee performance.

Transactional leadership was particularly effective across all performance dimensions. Autocratic leadership also showed a strong positive correlation, as did democratic and transformational leadership styles. Autocratic and democratic styles positively influenced performance significantly, while transformational leadership had a notable, though slightly less strong, impact.

For construction companies, understanding how staff respond to different leadership styles is crucial. The researcher recommends emphasizing transformational leadership, as it received the most favorable response from staff. Leaders should focus on idealized influence, connecting with employees, and promoting confidence and innovation. Autocratic leadership, although impactful, should be balanced with clear communication of standards and proactive problem-solving.

Managers should anticipate issues, clarify expectations, and encourage employee innovation. Building positive relationships through respect and understanding employees' values is essential. Training programs and psychological interventions can enhance leadership skills and clarify the impacts of leadership styles on employee performance. Overall, a mix of transformational and autocratic leadership traits, adapted to specific contexts, can significantly enhance employee performance and help achieve company goals.

Suggestion

The construction company and the leader/manager should involve employees in decision-making and leadership improvement and provide training and teamwork facilitation. In addition, policies and practices related to rewards or feedback systems in construction company can be adjusted to meet employees' needs in order to improve employee performance, such as understand what matters to their colleagues and the organization as a whole, motivate staff members to view possibilities and obstacles in a creative manner, as well as manage construction

workers to properly structure according to the project and each site to have the management and technical and material and material safety in the actual construction.

Future researcher should consider 6 more independent variables (bureaucratic, charismatic, mixed leadership, hybrid leadership, situational, and laissez-faire leadership styles) for their study in order to generate more information on leadership styles that positive significance on employee performance where it can help construction leaders to apply the correct leadership styles.

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