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Leadership Style and Traits Practice by the Contractors in Managing Construction Projects in Sarawak, Malaysia

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Abstract: Managing construction projects with a lack of leadership spirit can weaken the organization's ability to deal with challenges in the construction industry. Leadership necessarily requires influence in order to complete missions and provide guidance for a more well-organized and practical organisation. Positive leadership was responsible for nearly 76 percent of project success, while negative or poor leadership was responsible for 67 percent of project failure. As a result, the need for quality leadership to steer construction project success is undeniable. With appropriate leadership among the construction parties, the construction process can be navigated in a sustainable manner. As a result, the goals of this study are to investigate the leadership style, leadership quality / traits, and method to improve leadership competencies that should be implemented in Sarawak construction projects. This study was conducted on construction sites in Sarawak. The contractors are the respondents. 95 out of 118 respondents completed the Google form to respond to the question on the questionnaire that was shared online. The response rate was around 80%. The information is gathered quantitatively. The questionnaire data is then quantitatively analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 before being converted to graphical, chart, and table formats. According to the findings of this study, the transactional leadership style is the most prevalent in the Sarawak construction industry. The most desired leadership traits and qualities are honesty and dependability. The most favorable method to improve leadership competencies is a leader should have a capability to come out with a strategic action. In conclusion, a good leadership style is a must in order for the businesses to be excellent.

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1. Introduction

Construction was one of the first industries to be hit by COVID-19, and it has shown a high incidence of contamination (Koh, 2020). This may be due to a variety of reasons. Furthermore, working with dangerous materials and being exposed to potentially unhealthy conditions that affect respiratory function (Sauni, 2001) may increase the risk of underlying health problems related to COVID-19. Although evidence is scarce and direct causal mechanisms are still unknown, these factors may explain why this sector has seen a higher incidence of COVID-19. The construction industry, which is a major backbone of the national economies of many Middle Eastern countries, is also facing a significant challenge as a result of the spread of COVID-19 and the economic impact of a nationwide lockdown (Inoue & Todo, 2020). The economic effects of the pandemic is a critical threat for almost all nations, particularly small and developing economies (IMF, 2020).

During this pandemic, a good leadership is a crucial item in order to let the industry to keep on moving. Gharehbaghi and McManus (2003) define leadership as vision, motivation, organization, and action. Good leaders rise from an ongoing process of self-analysis and improvement through education, training, and experience. Leaders who are most effective are constantly working and studying to improve their leadership abilities. Leadership is a complex process in which a person influences other to complete a mission, task, or objective while also directing the organization in the right direction that improves cohesion and coherence. A construction manager who possesses the following leadership qualities must carry out this process: belief, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills. The primary responsibility of a construction manager as a leader is to achieve results in construction projects in order to complete tasks. As a result, the project was successfully completed. To provide effective leadership, inference, experience, and instinct are all used. Successful leaders possess a wide range of personal personalities, from the capability to deliver public speeches to relating to people in groups or individually.

A good leader must provide effective project leadership, and in order to do so, the leader must have a diverse set of abilities and sufficient authority. The leader and project owner must work closely together to ensure each other's success. To show the true performance of the project, the leader must have a thorough understanding of leadership philosophy in the construction delivery process and freely commit his/her vision and goals as a leader. A good leader must be able to apply effective leadership procedures throughout the construction project, including preconstruction (McManus & Gharehbaghi, 2003).

The construction industry involves a wide variety of people and organizations, many of which are focused on completing a particular job within a specific time frame. In order to effectively managing the construction projects, construction leaders must have good leadership qualities. As a result, this paper presents a study to discover leadership skills that construction leaders can possess in order to ensure the success of the construction project.

Managing construction projects with a lack of leadership spirit might decrease the organization's ability to deal with issues in the construction industry (Isa *et al.*, 2015). leadership necessitates influence in order to complete missions and provide direction for a more well-organized and practical organisation. According to the study, positive leadership contributed about 76 percent to project success, while negative or weak leadership linked to 67 percent of project failure (Nauman & Khan, 2008). As a result, the necessity for quality leadership to ensure construction project success is apparent. With competent leadership among the construction stakeholders, the construction process can be navigated in a sustainable manner (Nasaruddin & Rahman, 2017).

Quality leaders are capable of leading project teams in an efficient and effective manner in order to achieve organisational and project goals. According to the research conducted by Nasaruddin and Rahman (2017), various insight difficulties of leadership quality develop in the Malaysian sector. It was

discovered that important issues faced by construction leaders include ensuring that projects run successfully, regulating cash flow, and managing huge numbers of workers. To ensure their organization's competitiveness, leaders must be inventive and persistent in managing construction projects, rather than simply completing them.

This research is conduct to achieve certain objectives. To investigate the leadership style that been implemented by the contractor in managing the construction project. To investigate the leadership trait that been implemented by the contractor in managing the construction project. And lastly are to investigate the method to improve the leadership competencies among contractor in managing construction project.

This research will be carried out at the construction projects in Sarikei and Sibul town in Sarawak. The respondents would be the contractor's grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. The respondent will fill in their response to the question on the questionnaire that was shared online by using the Google form. The data are gained via quantitative method. The population in this research consists of contractors who have registered in grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 and the population size is around 170 respondents in Sarikei and Sibul Town, Sarawak. As a result, the sample size that should be used in this study is roughly 118 according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

This research is aims to provide references to the parties such as academic purposes. Relevant academic experts for example graduates and undergraduates can refer to the related topic and issues in this research. It is expected to be used in assisting the related field of academics' study in the upcoming future. Provide Engineers, contractors, and construction leaders a better information. Results and research findings will discuss the leadership style in confront the pandemic. This will help the engineers to be a good leadership. This is because it is needed for any construction company to adopt a high performing culture of efficiency and successful improvement. Besides that, these can be used by any engineers who are keen in providing a good example for their worker and for being a good leader. May review of this research may guide them to be a good leader.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership Definition

Kouzes and Posner (2002) define leadership as the process through which ordinary people bring out the best in themselves and others. Leaders have feelings, are credible, motivate people to act, set an example, and appreciate their employees' achievements. According to Havenga (2002), leaders entrust decision-making authority to others. Leadership can be described broadly as the process through which one person influences the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours of others. Leaders chart the path for the rest of us. They aid us in seeing what lies ahead. They help us visualise what we might be able to do. They inspire and inspire us. As a result of our differing ideas and solutions, a group of humans quickly devolves into dispute and conflict in the absence of leadership. Leadership allows us to collaborate and organise our efforts.

Table 1: Definitions of leadership (Yukl *et al.*, 2002)

Author	Definition of leadership
(Hemphill & Coons, 1957)	Leadership is the behaviour of an individual in directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal.
(Katz & Kahn, 1978)	Leadership is the dominant increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization.
(Burns, 1978)	Leadership is exercised when persons mobilize institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers.

(Jacobs & Jaques, 1990)	Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose.
(Schein, 1992)	Leadership is the ability to step outside the culture to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive.
(Fiedler, 1967)	Leadership is the act in which a leader involves in the course of directing and managing the work of his group members. This may involve such acts as put together the work relations, praising or criticizing group members, and showing consideration for their welfare and feelings.
(House <i>et al.</i> , 1999)	Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, persuade, and enable others to give toward the effectiveness and success of the organization.
(Mintzberg 1972)	Leadership is the process of persuading others to behave in preferred ways to achieve organizational objectives

2.2 Leadership Issues among Contractor

The issue of contractor leadership is a critical problem for both the corporate and public sectors in both developed and emerging countries. This problem is becoming more serious as the environment changes, and change is an ongoing challenge that leaders in all industries must recognise and address (Hassan *et al.*, 2009)

Table 2: Leadership Issues among Contractor

Issue	Explanation
Communication	Communication is one of the important factors in the success of a construction project. One of the main factors in the success of a project is through the effectiveness of the communication system. Most project managers are aware that the existence of problems during the implementation of construction project management is due to weaknesses and lack of communication methods (Misnan <i>et al.</i> , 2009).
Commitment	In the context of safety and health, Ambrose's (2010) study found a lack of commitment from superiors in implementing the Safety and Health Management System at construction sites. Supervisors in the construction industry have to shoulder their responsibility to comply with all legal provisions enforced on them especially in relation to occupational safety and health. Every individual who is called a leader or leader in an organization needs to be pragmatic and avoid an attitude of not being aware of what is going on in terms of project management.
Change and planning	In the past, many managers stated, maintaining continuous smoothness will give success to an organization. Yet, the world changes that are taking place today no one can predict (Holland, 2011). Daft (2005) points out that, if managers still believe in stability in the twentieth century, they will certainly be mistaken and unsuccessful. According to Daft (2005), nowadays, change is becoming commonplace in most organizations. This is because clearly we can see the changes in the passage of time happen very quickly. Thus, navigating change in an organization is not an easy job for a leader. As a leader who is unable to lead or make changes in an organization, then it is a probability that causes the organization to fail.

Safety and health

According to a study from previous researcher Ambrose (2010), some people think that safety is just a trivial matter because it does not provide profit to a construction project. For example, in improving the performance of the Safety and Health Management System at construction sites, high costs are required to fund safety and health programs implemented. The profit earned by the company can be seen through the record of zero accidents that occurred at the construction site. The effective implementation of Safety and Health Management System is important because it can show the role of the top ranks and security experts, namely the site Safety and Health Management, in preventing security-related incidents.

2.3 Leadership Styles in the Construction Industry

The issue of contractor leadership is a critical problem for both the corporate and public sectors in both developed and emerging countries. This problem is growing more serious as the environment changes, and change is a continual struggle. Leadership is an essential component of success in any undertaking that calls for teamwork among a group (or groups) of individuals. Leadership is far more important in construction (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). Munns and Bjeirmi (1996) emphasise the important importance of project leaders in deciding a project's success or failure. In an international study on construction leadership, Price (2009) indicated that all transformative aspects, including charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and customised consideration, are crucial. Price (2009) goes on to argue that transactional factors such as contingent reward, management by exception, active and passive leadership all play a important role in determining the performance of any leader. Table 2.3 showing that the type of leadership style in the construction business. (Appendix A)

2.4 Leadership traits

According to Jarad (2012), leadership attributes complement fundamental management talents by incorporating motivation and advanced problem-solving abilities. Additionally, the researchers concluded that different leadership characteristics might be suited for various sorts of projects (Jarad, 2012). Barker and Coy (2003) identified the following leadership characteristics as critical: humility, courage, integrity, humor, passion, compassion, and wisdom. According to Kirkpatrick & Locke (2011), leadership traits include the following: drive; desire to lead; honesty and integrity; self-confidence and expertise of the industry (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). To this purpose, the various characteristics are explained in greater detail at table 2.4 leadership traits (Appendix B)

2.5 Method to Improve Leadership Competencies

Leadership competencies are widely considered to include knowledge, abilities, and behaviors associated with job performance (Mohamed, 2015; Price, 2009). Competence is an underlying attribute of an individual that results in effective job performance. An underlying characteristic can be a motivation, a trait, or a talent; it can also be a component of one's self-image, social role, or body of knowledge. Additionally, the Project Management Institute (PMI) defines competency as a collection of connected knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and other traits that affect a sizable percentage of an individual's employment. This correlates with on-the-job performance, can be quantified against widely acknowledged criteria, and may be enhanced through training and development (Price, 2009) Capabilities in strategic management, project management, financial management, and change management are just a few of the leadership competencies required in the construction sector. Several of the leadership competencies required in the construction sector are discussed here. Table 2.5 are showing the competencies for leadership among contractor. (Appendix C)

3. Research Methodology

This section will discuss and describe the method used in this study. The method utilised must ensure that the research objectives and scope can be archived. Methodology is important in this study, and this section will go over the data collection process. Questionnaires were used as a data gathering

approach in this study. Following that, it will be involved in data collecting and data processing, which will be in numerical value. The flow chart for the research process is shown in the Figure 3 below.

The research methodology section describes all of the information required to achieve the study's results. The study technique includes specific information on workflow, strategy, and approach. The methods used to conduct the study should be thoroughly discussed.

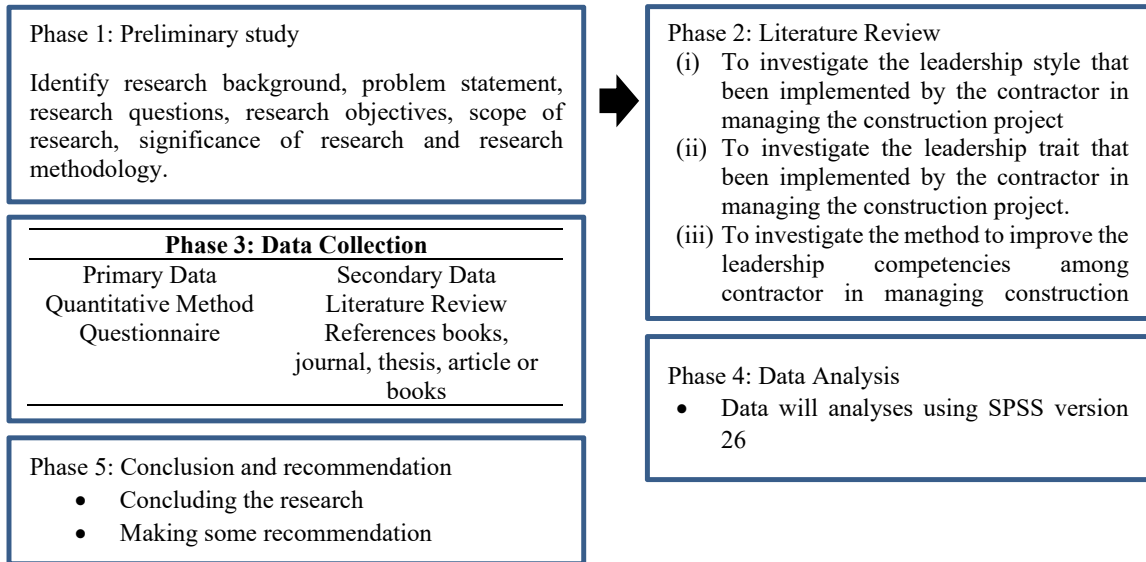


Figure 1: The Methodology Phase

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative method was applied in this study. Quantitative data is information regarding amounts and numbers. Quantitative approaches are focused with determining facts about social phenomena and are based on a fixed and measurable reality. Data is obtained by measuring objects and analysed by numerical comparison. Finally, data will be analysed statistically and reported (McLeod, 2019). The survey questionnaire for this study will be created using Google forms. The collected information and results from the respondents, as well as the literature study, will be analysed and evaluated to meet the research aims and objectives. The research design method is shown in the table below.

Table 3: Research Design Method

No	Research Objectives	Method
1	To investigate the leadership style that been implemented by the contractor in managing the construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature Review Quantitative (Questionnaires)
2	To investigate the leadership trait that been implemented by the contractor in managing the construction project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature Review Quantitative (Questionnaires)
3	To investigate the method to improve the leadership competencies among contractor in managing construction project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature Review Quantitative (Questionnaires)