

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND GOVERNANCE ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN MEGAPROJECTS

Al-Subaie A. A., Faisal M. N., Aouni B., Jabeen F.*

Abstract: Megaprojects are very large-scale complex ventures that involve multiple stakeholders and influence millions of lives. In the literature, leadership styles and governance have been found to have significant relationship with project performance. However, majority of the research on megaprojects are in the Western contexts. Thereby, the emerging economies in Middle East, which have seen many megaprojects in recent times, provide unique setting to test various theories. Based on the review, a theoretical model relating various leadership styles and governance with project performance is proposed. The proposed model is empirically tested using data from 157 senior managers from megaprojects in Qatar. The results of the study shows a positive relationship between transformational style of leadership and megaproject performance. It also establishes positive relationship between project governance and megaproject performance. However, no relation was found between transactional style and passive style of leadership with megaproject performance. The results of the study provides managers direction to develop mechanisms to facilitate transformational leadership development. Further, top managers need to be proactively involved in the project governance for smooth and successful implementation of organizational strategies leading to megaproject success.

Keywords: Megaprojects, Leadership, Governance, Project Performance, Qatar

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Introduction

Megaprojects can be defined as “large-scale, complex ventures that typically cost a billion dollars or more, take many years to develop and build, involve multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact millions of people” (Flyvbjerg, 2014: 6). Megaprojects has started evolving after the World War II and majority of megaprojects are in the domain of infrastructure development (Sato and Cha-gas, 2014). Megaproject performance has emerged as an interesting area of research because of the huge stakes involved in megaprojects. Stakeholder

* **Abdulla Abdulaziz Al-Subaie**, MBA, **Prof. Mohd Nishat Faisal**, PhD. **Prof. Belaid Aouni**, PhD. College of Business and Economics, Qatar University, Qatar, ²**Prof Fauzia Jabeen**, PhD. College of Business Administration, Abu-Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates

✉ corresponding author: nishat786@qu.edu.qa

✉ abduallas.cbe@gmail.com; belaid.aouni@qu.edu.qa;fauzia.jabeen@adu.ac.ae

management and engagement are very crucial for effective management of complex projects. Klakegg and Haavaldsen (2011) claimed that project governance is very critical for project success and there is a need for clear definition and principles which are yet to be achieved. Priemus et al. (2008) stated that megaprojects have been researched in the Western and American continents but is limited in other geographical contexts. Therefore, research focused in understanding management characteristics and practices in the light of megaprojects, would contribute immensely to the extant literature.

Zahra (2011) suggested that the Arab Middle Eastern countries offer an important setting for management researchers to test many existing theories, due to the fast pace of the economic and geopolitical changes occurring in the region. Buoyed by its gas exports, Qatar has seen unprecedented growth in the last decade and hence authors felt that a study in the context of Qatar is very relevant in the present scenario. Since the start of the new millennium (21 century), Qatar has seen growth (double digits annually) in all economic sectors driven by the exploration and production of oil & gas (mainly gas) which saw several megaprojects in the country in areas like infrastructure, airport, port among others. Hence, this research proposes to understand the role of leadership style and governance on the performance of megaprojects. Three leadership styles were considered for the study, transformational, transactional, and passive. The major aim of the study is to test the impact of these leadership style on project performance. Further, the study also aims to test the relationship between governance using standard principles of project governance and project performance, which was measured using four sub-dimensions of time, cost, quality and client's satisfaction.

Literature Review and Proposed Theoretical Model

Many studies have been conducted in the management practices namely leadership (e.g. Anderson and Polkinghorn, 2008; Larsson et al., 2015; Müller & Turner, 2010) and project governance (e.g; Bekker and Steyn, 2009; Joslin and Müller, 2016) and its influence on the project performance and success. Similarly, project governance is also not extensively studied in context of mega-projects (Joslin and Muller, 2016). In other words, through the extant literature review and to the best of the researcher's knowledge it is the first time that leadership and governance are focused upon together in the context of the megaprojects. Thus, the research is expected to bridge the gap in the relatively under researched area of megaprojects (Dyer, 2017; Priemus et al., 2008). Specifically with respect to the country this study is planning to be conducted (Qatar), this study is expected to address the gap in researching leadership and governance related theories in the context of Arab countries, where it is said that the theoretical frameworks suiting Western context may not necessarily fit with the Arab culture context (Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013).

Many leadership styles and competencies are investigated in the context of general project management (e.g., Anderson and Polkinghorn, 2008; Johnston, 2011; Novo *et al.*, 2017; Higgs, 2003). Yet, there is no consensus in the project management literature as to what is the most suitable approach for successful project implementation. From the many theories of leadership available in literature, we propose to use the three leadership styles proposed by Bass (1985) which are, transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. This model, also known as the Full Range of Leadership Model “represents the most dominant theoretical approach to leadership to date since numerous primary studies and integrative analyses demonstrated its effectiveness, and in particular the positive relations of transformational leadership with relevant outcome variables in organizations” (Peus *et al.*, 2013: 778). The predominant position that this model occupies has been reaffirmed in other studies (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

According to Müller and Lecoeuvre (2014), one method of operationalizing the organization's governance positioning is with regard to two continuums, namely: (1) shareholder-stakeholder continuum and (2) behavior–outcome continuum. This research chooses Müller and Lecoeuvre (2014), model as an attempt to understand organizations' project governance approaches and the role of the two dimensions for project success. This model has been shown to be applicable to a wide variety of project types, industries and geographies (Joslin and Müller, 2016; Müller and Turner, 2010).

Jugdev and Müller (2005) have reviewed the studies related to project success and have found out four necessary conditions that can lead to project success. Shenhar *et al.*, (2001) and Williams (2016) proposed frameworks by including some specific, generic and context dependent success factors through complex causal relationships. There are multiple ways of measuring the success of a project (Nixon *et al.*, 2012), however, when it comes to megaprojects, the key performance indicators (KPIs) used may need to be revised. This study proposes to use four dimensions of time, cost, quality and client's satisfaction to measure project success/performance. Finally, the proposed theoretical model is presented below in Figure 1.

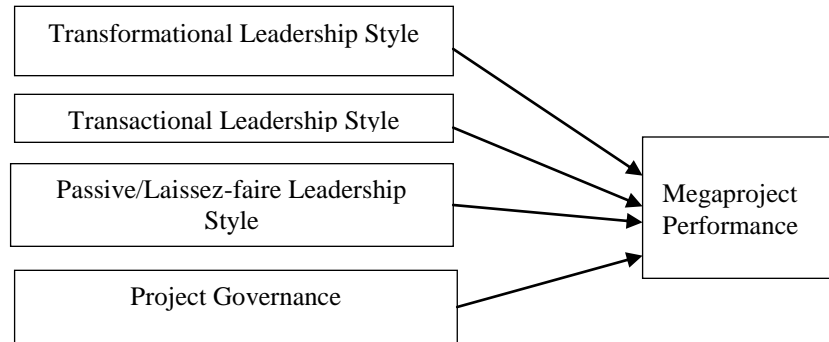


Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Model

According to path-goal leadership theory (House, 1996), when the leadership is of transformational in nature, then the subordinates get emotionally attached to the leader and would be internally motivated and aroused to follow the leader's behaviour. This would results in higher performance of the team and subsequently successful project implementation (Yammarino et al., 1993). Hence, the first hypothesis can be stated as; H₁: The transformational leadership style of project managers has positive impact on megaproject performance.

Transactional leadership, as the name suggests, is an exchange process based on the fulfilment of contractual obligations and is usually gauged as formulating objectives and monitoring and controlling outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2003). According to Burns (1978), in transactional leadership style, there would be some valued outcomes (e.g.; money, prestige) the subordinates would be getting, if they follow the leader's wishes, and thus would result in successful project completion (Bass et al., 2003). Thereby, the second hypothesis can be stated as:

H₂: The transactional leadership style of project managers has positive impact on megaproject performance.

The third type of leadership style based on Charismatic School of leadership by Bass (1985) is the passive type or the Laissez-faire. Unlike transformational and transactional, when it comes to passive or Laissez-faire leaders, they avoids making decisions in the project, they forgo responsibility, and does not use authority in their actions and thus can have very adverse effect on the project success. Hence it can be hypothesized that;

H₃: The passive leadership style of project managers is not related to megaproject performance.

The next aspect is related to project governance. As reported, governance aspect has always been identified as a crucial factor impacting the performance of any project. According to principle-agent theory, the key aspect of any project would be accountability (Jensen, 2003). Thus it can be inferred that project governance can positively impact project performance and so it is hypothesized that;

H₄: Project governance factors will have a positive relationship with megaproject performance.

The next section introduces the methodology employed for testing the hypotheses. This was followed by the detailed analysis of the data and the inferences drawn from the analysis.

Methodology and Data Collection

This study has made use of an extensive field survey for the purpose of data collection. The respondents were from the megaprojects that were part of developing metro in Qatar and administered by Qatar Rail. The details of these megaprojects is provided in Table 1. Majority of these projects complemented other megaprojects like Lusail Tram project is the lifeline of the transportation in Lusail City Megaproject while Red Line connects major centers of the city to the state of the art Hamad International Airport, the hub for Qatar Airways. Further, these metro lines are connected to the stadiums, which are built to host World Cup 2022, another group of megaprojects. Further, it is evident from Table 1, that the contract of the each megaproject was awarded to a different joint venture with a wide variety of leadership and governance structures, including the workforce drawn from all around the World. The diversification in workforce is a positive element for data collection as it ensured that people with wide variety of experience were included in the sample. The data was collected using a physical questionnaire, which was distributed to 250 respondents selected on the basis of their position in the organization. After two reminders by email and phone call, 157 completed questionnaires were received yielding a response rate of 62.8%, which is satisfactory in questionnaire based studies.

Regarding the scales for measuring the constructs, leadership style was measured using a 26-item scale. These 26 items had 14 items for transformational leadership, 6 items for transactional leadership and 6 for passive and avoidant leadership. All items were measured using a five point Likert Scale. To measure the project governance, this study has made use of the 13 principles of the governance of project management. Finally, megaproject success or performance was measured using four sub-dimensions of time, cost, quality and client's satisfaction using a 12-item scale. A copy of the

questionnaire can be made available from the corresponding author upon request. The next section discusses the data analysis and inferences.

Table 1. Qatar Rail Megaprojects for Data Collection

S. No.	Megaproject	Joint Venture Partners	Budget (Billion USD)	Project Scope
1.	Red Line North Underground	Salini Impregilo, SK Engineering and Galfar Al Misnad	2.324	Fully underground consisting of a length of 22.7 km and seven stations.
2.	Gold Line Underground	AKTOR-L&T-YAPI-STFA-JEC	3.367	Total length of 15 km and ten stations.
3.	Green Line Underground	PORR-SBG-HBK	2.469	Total length of 22 km including six stations
4.	Red Line South Underground (RLS UG)	QDVC - GS Engineering & Construction Corporation and Al-Darwish	2.049	Total length of 12 km connecting Hamad International Airport Doha
5.	Msheireb and Education City Stations	Consolidated Contractors Group SAL	1.401	Msheireb and Education City interchange stations catering to more than one metro lines.
6.	Lusail Light Rail Tram	QDVC and Alstom SA France	3.527	Three Tramway Lines (Yellow, Green and Purple), 28 Stations and 28 km of track.
7.	Systems	MMHKT Consortium: Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Mitsubishi Corp, Hitachi, Kinki Sharyo, Thales Canada	3.194	Responsible for the Railway Systems (Tracks, Signaling and Communications, Depot)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The final sample consisted of 157 completed questionnaires. Part one of the four-part questionnaire collected demographic information of the respondents. The respondents were predominantly male (141 individuals or 89.8% of the sample). There were only 16 female respondents (10.2% of the sample). Most of the respondents were in the age group 36-46 years, followed by 47-57 years. There was no respondent below 25 years of age.

Regarding educational qualifications, 57 respondents (36.3%) had a qualification of Graduate degree, and another 55 respondents (35%) had masters or above qualification.

Another question was regarding the total years of work experience of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (54.1%) had a total work experience of 20 or more years. Only 5 respondents (3.2%) had less than 8 years of total work experience. With regard to job profile, majority of the respondents (64%) were at senior positions (Director or above and Senior Manager or Manager). This provides confidence about their knowledge about leadership in megaprojects. Regarding current job or level, whether in the present organisation or cumulatively, 91 respondents (58%) were working in the current job or level for a period of 2 to 7 years. Further, about the association of respondents as per their organization. A majority of the respondents (92 individuals, 58.6%) were working as PMC/Consultants, 44 (28%) were direct hires of Qatar rail, 14 (8.9%) were secondees to Qatar rail and 7 (4.5%) were contractor's employees.

As part of the analysis, the composite scores of the three leadership styles, namely, transformational leadership, transactional leadership and passive leadership were computed by taking the average of the responses to the respective items related to these three leadership styles. A consolidated score for leadership style was also computed by taking the average of the responses to all the items related to leadership style. In a similar manner, a composite score for project governance was computed by taking the average of the responses to all the items related to project governance. A composite score for project performance was computed by taking the average of the responses to all the items related to project performance. Subsequently, correlations were tested between the dependent variable project performance with the independent variables separately. The result of correlating the independent variable leadership style and the dependent variable project performance showed that leadership style and project performance are significantly correlated with a correlation coefficient of 0.414. Next, we proceeded to check whether each of the three leadership styles too are significantly correlated with project performance individually.

From the results of correlation analysis it can be concludes that the transactional leadership style and passive leadership style were not significantly correlated with project performance. However, the transformational leadership style is significantly correlated with project performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.449. These results lead to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 and 3 while Hypothesis 2 is not accepted. This indicates that as far as project performance is concerned, the significant effect in terms of leadership style only comes from transformational leadership style. As a next step, we checked the correlation between the dependent variable project performance with the independent variable project governance. The results showed that

these variables are correlated significantly, with a correlation coefficient of 0.552. This leads to the acceptance of Hypothesis 4.

Since the earlier correlation analysis showed that only the transformational leadership style was correlated significantly with the project performance, we ran multiple regression with the project performance as the dependent variable and project governance, transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style and passive leadership style as the four independent variables. The results are presented below.

Table 2. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.605 ^a	.366	.349	.34234
a. Predictors: (Constant), PassiveLeader, ProjectGovernance, TransfoLeader, TransactLeader				
b. Dependent Variable: ProjectPerformance				

Table 3. ANOVA^a Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.199	4	2.550	21.756	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.697	151	.117		
	Total	27.896	155			
a. Dependent Variable: ProjectPerformance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), PassiveLeader, ProjectGovernance, TransfoLeader, TransactLeader						

Table 4. Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.347	.340		3.962	.000		
	ProjectGovernance	.399	.065	.438	6.089	.000	.814	1.229
	TransfoLeader	.222	.061	.272	3.653	.000	.758	1.319
	TransactLeader	.011	.075	.012	.144	.886	.574	1.743
	PassiveLeader	.044	.084	.043	.521	.603	.612	1.633
a. Dependent Variable: ProjectPerformance								

ANOVA results in Table 3 provides an assessment of the significance of the model. In this case, the value of *F*-statistic is 21.56 and the *p* value is 0.000, which is less than

0.05. These values indicate that our model is significant. The *R*-square value in Table 2 indicates that the two independent variables (Project Governance and Transformational Leadership style) can explain 36.6% of the variation in the dependent variable, Project Performance. We are also required to assess the multi-collinearity among the predictor variables, implying that predictor variables do not have a high degree of relationship among themselves. The VIF values in Table 4 indicate there is no issue of multi-collinearity among the independent variables. VIF values of up to 5 are considered to be acceptable.

The results in Table 4 provide an answer regarding which variables significantly predict the dependent variable "Project Performance". The value of *t* statistic in Table 4 indicates that the independent variables, "Project Governance" and "Transformational Leadership" style have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable "Project Performance" with a *p* value of 0.000. However, the independent variables "Transactional Leadership" and "Passive Leadership" do not have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, "Project Performance" as the *p* value for both of these variables is more than 0.05. Thereby, the resulting regression equation can be written as:

$$\text{ProjectPerformance} = 1.347 + 0.399 * \text{ProjectGovernance} + 0.222 * \text{Transformational Leadership style}$$

Discussion

The analysis conducted in the previous section establishes that transformational style leadership is considered by the participants to be the one that is significantly related to megaprojects performance in context of Qatar. This result complements previous studies like Aga et al., (2016); Arnold (2008); Ammeter and Dukerich (2002). The results being among the first in context of Middle East are extremely important for policy makers as many megaprojects are underway and there is a constant concern to develop leadership from among the local population. This research would open new vistas in creating strategies that would facilitate leaders with transformational leadership traits. The research contributes by testing leadership theory in context of megaprojects, as the application of relevant management theories in the context of megaprojects is very little or scarce (Ika et al., 2012). Transformational leaders strengthen creativity, raise awareness, and develop an emotional association, which ultimately help followers' to achieve exceptional goals (Islam et al., 2020); this is considered extremely important in context of ongoing megaprojects in Qatar as majority of these projects are seen as a precursor to host a mega event of football WorldCup in 2022. The results of our study also confirm the importance of practicing transformational leadership style in megaprojects as transformational style of leader is seen as an effective style in managing change (Basu, 2015).

Our results did not find a relationship between transactional style of leadership and megaproject performance. Previous studies like Antonakis et al. (2003) and Shamir et al. (1993) suggest that transactional style may be positively related to project performance, however transactional leaders work best with employees who know their jobs and are motivated by the reward-penalty system. In case of megaprojects, which are very complex, employees, feel that leaders need to inspire and motivate rather than direct. This may be a possible reason for non-existence of a relationship between transactional leadership and project performance in the present research. Further, under transactional leaders, employees are more likely to be concerned about the fairness of outcomes than the fairness of procedures (Pillai et al., 1999), however in megaprojects which run for many years, employees might not be motivated with the outcomes which may not realize in short term.

The present study also found significant relationship between project governance and project performance. Project governance represents the framework, functions, and processes that guide project management activities in order to create a unique product, service, or result to meet organizational strategic and operational goals (PMI 2016). In case of our study, which targeted respondents from Qatar rail megaprojects, the governance system is well structured with clear responsibilities and policies, thereby considered by the respondents to be supportive in achieving project success. Further, according to Musawir et al. (2020), the role of project governance becomes especially critical when the project in consideration is high-priority; this applies well to Qatar Rail project, which was high in terms of priority due to its foreseeable impact on public transport.

Conclusions

Megaprojects studies have identified that the role of project manager is quite crucial and so if they do not adapt to suitable leadership style, the success of the project would be at stake. A theoretical model was proposed that was tested in megaproject settings of Qatar Rail. The results of the study establishes the relationship between the transformational leadership style of the project manager, project governance practices and the performance of the project in megaproject. Thereby, the two variables should be given priority by the senior managers, and the organization should develop policies to facilitate the development of transformational leaders in the organization. These results can also aid practitioners to employ effective approaches in line with the outcome of the study to enhance chances of success in the megaprojects. Increased capability on some leadership dimensions, as also the project governance paradigm chosen could improve success in the megaprojects.

Recommendations for managerial practice

The results of the study has several recommendations for managerial practice. Top managers need to be pro-actively involved in the project governance for smooth and successful implementation of organizational strategies. To develop transformational leaders, there is a need to create training programs, as many aspects of transformational leadership can be enhanced using training programs. Further, managers need to create mechanism leading to distribution of authority, formalisation of rules, and downward communication, all of which supports transformational leadership development. Large project based organizations should also create programs to provide international exposure to their employees as international exposure has positive influence on transformational leadership. Managers should work to improve their employees' ability to change and embrace the change, as these lies at the heart of transformational leadership.

Limitations of the study

The present study also has some limitations; first, it was conducted in Qatar, where, the majority of the workers are expatriates, leading to some element of bias. Second, there is a chance that some important item may have been neglected in measurement of the constructs of leadership styles and governance. Finally, the project performance was measured using perception of the respondents, which may differ with the ground reality.

Future scope of work

Future studies may collect data from other gulf countries like UAE to test the validity of the model. In addition, influence of culture as a moderating variable on leadership and governance can be tested in future studies, as culture in Arab world is distinct from western countries. In future studies, researchers may also test the relationship between PADI (Producer, Administrator, Entrepreneur, Integrator) leadership style and project performance.

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BADANIE ROLI STYLÓW PRZYWÓDZTWA I ZARZĄDZANIA W REALIZACJI PROJEKTÓW W MEGAPROJEKTACH

Streszczenie: Megaprojekty to złożone przedsięwzięcia na bardzo dużą skalę, które obejmują wielu interesariuszy i wpływają na miliony istnień ludzkich. W literaturze stwierdzono, że style przywództwa i zarządzanie mają istotny związek z wynikami projektu. Jednak większość badań nad megaprojektami odbywa się w kontekście zachodnim. W ten sposób wschodzące gospodarki na Bliskim Wschodzie, które w ostatnim czasie były świadkami wielu megaprojektów, zapewniają wyjątkowe warunki do testowania różnych teorii. Na podstawie przeglądu zaproponowano model teoretyczny łączący różne style przywództwa i zarządzania z wynikami projektu. Proponowany model jest testowany empirycznie z wykorzystaniem danych od 157 menedżerów wyższego szczebla z megaprojektów w Katarze. Wyniki badania wskazują na pozytywny związek między transformacyjnym stylem przywództwa a wynikami megaprojektu. Ustanawia również pozytywny związek między zarządzaniem projektem a wydajnością megaprojektu. Nie znaleziono jednak związku między stylem transakcyjnym a pasywnym stylem przywództwa a wydajnością megaprojektu. Wyniki badania wskazują menedżerom kierunek rozwoju mechanizmów ułatwiających rozwój przywództwa transformacyjnego. Ponadto kierownicy najwyższego szczebla muszą aktywnie uczestniczyć w zarządzaniu projektem, aby zapewnić płynne i skuteczne wdrażanie strategii organizacyjnych prowadzących do sukcesu megaprojektu.

Słowa kluczowe: megaprojekty, przywództwo, zarządzanie, wydajność projektu, Katar

研究领导风格和治理对大型项目的项目绩效的作用

摘要:大型项目是非常大型的复杂项目,涉及多个利益相关者,并影响着数百万生命。在文献中,领导风格和治理与项目绩效有着显著的关系。但是,大多数关于大型项目的研究都是在西方背景下进行的。因此,最近出现了许多大型项目的中东新兴经济体为检验各种理论提供了独特的环境。在此基础上,提出了一种将各种领导风格和治理方式与项目绩效联系起来的理论模型。使用来自卡塔尔大型项目的157位高级管理人员的数据,对提出的模型进行了经验测试。研究结果表明,领导的转变风格与大型项目绩效之间存在正相关关系。它还建立了项目治理与大型项目绩效之间的积极关系。但是,在大型项目绩效的交易风格和被动式领导风格之间未发现任何关系。研究结果为经理们提供了发展机制的方向,以促进变革型领导力的发展。此外,高层管理人员需要积极参与项目治理,以顺利,成功地实施组织策略,从而使大型项目获得成功。

关键字:大型项目,领导力,治理,项目绩效,卡塔尔