

Effect of Leadership Style on Employee Performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effect of leadership styles on employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the influence of autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles on employee performance. Grounded in Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory and supported by Path-Goal Theory, Human Relations Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, and Lewin's Leadership Styles Theory, the study sought to provide empirical evidence on how leadership practices influence employee productivity within Nigeria's manufacturing sector. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and drew on empirical data from 260 valid respondents selected from a sample of 386 employees through stratified random sampling. The population comprised 8,720 employees of Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of SPSS Version 20. Results revealed that autocratic leadership style significantly influences employee performance ($\beta = 0.226, p < 0.05$), transactional leadership style exerts a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.341, p < 0.05$), laissez-faire leadership style positively predicts employee performance ($\beta = 0.128, p < 0.05$), while transformational leadership style emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.447, p < 0.05$). The findings further indicated significant positive relationships between all leadership style dimensions and employee performance. The study concludes that effective leadership practices are critical organizational resources for enhancing employee productivity, commitment, and operational efficiency. It recommends strengthening transformational leadership, continuous leadership development programmes, and performance-based management systems to sustain organizational competitiveness.*

Keywords: leadership style, employee performance, autocratic leadership style, transactional leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, transformational leadership Style.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is widely recognized as one of the most important factors influencing employee behavior, productivity, and organizational success. Effective leadership enables organizations to motivate employees, coordinate activities, improve performance, and achieve strategic

objectives. In today's highly competitive business environment, organizations increasingly depend on leadership practices that enhance employee commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity. This is particularly important in the manufacturing sector, where employee performance directly affects operational efficiency, product quality, profitability, and organizational sustainability.

The Nigerian manufacturing sector operates within a challenging environment characterized by rising production costs, infrastructural deficits, energy supply constraints, foreign exchange fluctuations, and intense competition. These challenges require organizations to adopt effective leadership approaches capable of maximizing employee performance and maintaining competitiveness. Leadership style, which refers to the pattern of behavior adopted by leaders in directing and influencing employees, has therefore become a critical organizational concern. Among the most widely studied leadership styles are autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership, each exerting varying effects on employee attitudes and workplace outcomes.

Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, is one of the largest cement manufacturing facilities in Africa and relies heavily on employee performance to achieve its operational and strategic goals. Despite significant investments in technology and human resources, maintaining high levels of employee productivity, motivation, and commitment remains essential for sustaining organizational effectiveness. However, empirical studies examining the influence of different leadership styles on employee performance within Nigeria's manufacturing sector remain limited. This study therefore examines the effect of autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles on employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence that will contribute to leadership literature and offer practical insights for improving employee productivity and organizational performance within the manufacturing sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Style

Leadership style refers to the pattern of behavior exhibited by leaders when directing, motivating, influencing, and managing employees toward the achievement of organizational goals. It encompasses the methods, approaches, and strategies leaders employ in making decisions, communicating expectations, resolving conflicts, and coordinating organizational activities. Leadership style is a critical determinant of employee attitudes, behavior, motivation, and performance because it shapes the work environment within which employees operate. Effective leadership promotes employee engagement, productivity, innovation, and commitment, while ineffective leadership may result in low morale, reduced productivity, and high employee turnover. Consequently, leadership style remains one of the most important organizational factors influencing employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Autocratic Leadership Style

Autocratic leadership style is characterized by centralized decision-making, strict supervision, and limited employee participation in organizational decisions. Under this leadership approach, authority is concentrated in the leader, who determines policies, procedures, and work methods

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with little or no consultation with subordinates. Employees are expected to comply with instructions and perform assigned duties according to established directives. Although autocratic leadership is often criticized for limiting employee creativity and participation, it can be effective in situations requiring quick decision-making, strict compliance with procedures, and close supervision. In manufacturing organizations where safety standards and operational efficiency are critical, autocratic leadership contributes to improved discipline, control, and task completion.

Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leadership is based on the exchange relationship between leaders and followers. Leaders establish clear expectations, performance standards, and reward systems designed to motivate employees toward achieving organizational objectives. Employees who meet established targets receive rewards and recognition, while those who fail to meet expectations may be subjected to corrective actions. Transactional leadership promotes accountability, efficiency, and goal attainment through performance monitoring and structured management practices. By clarifying responsibilities and linking performance to rewards, transactional leadership enhances employee productivity and organizational effectiveness.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Laissez-faire leadership is a leadership approach that provides employees with considerable freedom and autonomy in carrying out their responsibilities. Leaders adopting this style exercise minimal supervision and allow employees to make decisions concerning their work activities. This leadership style assumes that employees possess the competence, experience, and motivation necessary to perform effectively without constant managerial intervention. While laissez-faire leadership may encourage innovation, creativity, and independence, excessive freedom can result in role ambiguity, poor coordination, and reduced productivity if employees lack adequate guidance and support. Therefore, the effectiveness of this leadership style depends largely on the competence and self-motivation of employees.

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring, motivating, and empowering employees to exceed expectations and achieve organizational goals. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision, encourage innovation, support employee development, and foster participation in decision-making processes. They seek to transform employee attitudes and behaviors by building trust, commitment, and a shared sense of purpose. Research consistently identifies transformational leadership as one of the most effective leadership styles because of its positive influence on employee motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, creativity, and performance. Transformational leaders encourage employees to contribute meaningfully to organizational success while promoting personal and professional development.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively execute assigned duties and responsibilities in line with organizational objectives. It encompasses the quality, quantity, efficiency, and timeliness of work outcomes produced by employees. Employee performance is a key indicator of organizational effectiveness because it directly influences productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage. Employee

performance is influenced by several factors, including leadership style, motivation, organizational culture, communication, training, and working conditions. In manufacturing organizations, employee performance is particularly important because operational efficiency, product quality, and organizational sustainability largely depend on workforce effectiveness.

Leadership Style and Employee Performance

The relationship between leadership style and employee performance has attracted significant attention in management and organizational research. Leadership influences employee behavior by shaping workplace relationships, communication patterns, motivation levels, and organizational commitment. Effective leadership creates an environment that encourages employees to perform optimally, while ineffective leadership may reduce morale and productivity. Autocratic leadership contributes to performance through discipline and control; transactional leadership enhances performance through rewards, supervision, and accountability; laissez-faire leadership promotes autonomy and creativity; while transformational leadership improves performance through inspiration, motivation, and employee empowerment. Consequently, organizations seeking to improve productivity and competitiveness must adopt leadership approaches that align with employee needs and organizational objectives.

Theoretical Review

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory was developed by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass (1985). The theory explains how leaders inspire and motivate followers to achieve exceptional levels of performance by transforming their attitudes, beliefs, and values toward organizational goals. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision, encourage innovation, support employee development, and foster commitment among followers. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership is characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions enable leaders to motivate employees beyond personal interests toward the achievement of collective organizational objectives.

The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how transformational leadership influences employee performance through motivation, empowerment, creativity, and commitment. Transformational leaders encourage employees to exceed expectations by creating an environment that promotes innovation, participation, and personal growth. Within manufacturing organizations such as Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, transformational leadership can enhance employee productivity by promoting teamwork, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The theory therefore provides a strong foundation for explaining the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee performance.

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional Leadership Theory was developed by Burns (1978) and refined by Bass (1985). The theory is based on an exchange relationship between leaders and followers whereby employees receive rewards for accomplishing assigned tasks and are subjected to corrective actions when performance falls below expectations. The major components of transactional

leadership include contingent rewards and management by exception. Transactional leaders clarify roles, establish performance standards, monitor employee activities, and provide incentives that encourage employees to achieve organizational objectives.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its explanation of how performance-based rewards and supervision influence employee performance. Employees are more likely to perform effectively when expectations are clearly communicated and achievements are recognized. In a manufacturing environment where productivity, quality control, and operational efficiency are essential, transactional leadership promotes accountability and discipline. The theory therefore supports the examination of transactional leadership style as a determinant of employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc.

The core concepts reviewed in this study include leadership, leadership styles (autocratic, transformational, and laissez-faire), and employee performance. Leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping employee behavior, motivation, and productivity. According to Efendi et al. (2023), autocratic leadership involves centralized decision-making where the leader exercises substantial control over subordinates. While this approach can facilitate quick decisions, it often limits employee participation, creativity, and motivation, thereby negatively affecting performance.

Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal Theory was developed by House (1971) and further expanded by House and Mitchell (1974). The theory posits that leaders are responsible for clarifying goals, identifying the paths required to achieve those goals, removing obstacles, and providing rewards that motivate employees. According to the theory, leaders can adopt different leadership styles depending on the needs of employees and the demands of the work environment. These leadership styles include directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership. The theory is applicable to this study because it explains how leaders can improve employee performance by selecting leadership behaviors that match employee needs and workplace situations. In manufacturing organizations, employees often encounter operational challenges that require guidance, support, and motivation. Effective leaders enhance employee performance by providing clear direction, facilitating goal attainment, and ensuring that employees have the resources necessary to perform effectively. Path-Goal Theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how leadership styles influence employee performance.

Human Relations Theory

Human Relations Theory was propounded by Elton Mayo and emerged from the Hawthorne Studies conducted between 1924 and 1932. The theory emphasizes the importance of human factors, interpersonal relationships, communication, and employee participation in enhancing productivity. Unlike Scientific Management Theory, which focused primarily on tasks and efficiency, Human Relations Theory recognizes employees as valuable organizational assets whose performance is influenced by social interactions and workplace relationships.

The theory is relevant to this study because it highlights the role of leadership in creating supportive relationships and effective communication channels within organizations. Human Relations Theory suggests that employees perform better when they feel valued, respected, and

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involved in organizational processes. Leadership styles that encourage participation, teamwork, communication, and employee engagement are therefore likely to improve performance. This perspective is particularly relevant to Dangote Cement Plc, where employee cooperation and coordination are essential for achieving operational objectives.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory was developed by Abraham Maslow (1943). The theory proposes that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy consisting of physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. According to Maslow, individuals are motivated to satisfy lower-level needs before progressing to higher-level needs. The fulfillment of these needs' influences employee behavior, motivation, and performance within organizations.

The theory is relevant to this study because leadership styles play a significant role in satisfying employee needs. Leaders who provide a safe working environment, recognize employee contributions, encourage teamwork, and support personal growth help employees achieve higher levels of motivation and performance. Transformational and transactional leadership styles, in particular, contribute to meeting employees' esteem and self-actualization needs through recognition, empowerment, and professional development. Consequently, Maslow's theory provides valuable insight into the motivational processes through which leadership styles influence employee performance.

Empirical Review

Putri and Setiany (2023), Bhattarai (2019), and Simamora and Oswari (2019) found that transformational leadership enhances employee commitment, creativity, and job satisfaction, leading to improved productivity. Their findings suggest that leaders who inspire and motivate employees create a supportive work environment that encourages innovation, commitment, and higher levels of performance.

Onsongo et al. (2020) reported that autocratic leadership can improve efficiency and decision-making speed, particularly in situations requiring strict control and adherence to procedures. However, Adebayo et al. (2020) observed that excessive reliance on this leadership style reduces employee morale, limits participation, and negatively affects long-term performance and innovation. This suggests that while autocratic leadership may be effective in highly structured environments, its sustainability depends on the balance between authority and employee involvement.

Similarly, empirical evidence on laissez-faire leadership indicates both positive and negative outcomes. Fadhillah et al. (2023) found that laissez-faire leadership can enhance employee performance when employees are highly skilled, experienced, and self-motivated. However, Vitez (2020) highlighted that inadequate supervision often results in role ambiguity, reduced accountability, and low productivity, particularly where employees require guidance and direction. These findings underscore the importance of organizational context in determining the effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership.

Studies on transactional leadership also demonstrate significant positive effects on employee performance. Existing literature emphasizes that reward systems, recognition, and performance-based incentives motivate employees to achieve organizational objectives. Employees tend to perform more effectively when expectations are clearly defined and accomplishments are appropriately rewarded.

Within the Nigerian context, Fali et al. (2021), Ayeni and Emeka (2021), and Abubakar and Sulaiman (2020) found that leadership styles significantly influence employee motivation, commitment, and productivity. Their studies revealed that transformational and participative leadership styles are associated with higher employee performance, while autocratic leadership is often linked to reduced employee morale and job satisfaction. Additionally, Folajimi and Dare (2020) emphasized that leadership effectiveness is closely connected to communication, motivation, and organizational culture, all of which contribute positively to employee performance.

Despite these contributions, the literature reveals that most empirical studies have focused on sectors such as banking, education, and public administration, with limited attention given to large-scale manufacturing firms. This is significant because manufacturing organizations such as Dangote Cement Plc operate in environments characterized by labor-intensive processes, strict operational procedures, and a high reliance on teamwork and coordination. These unique characteristics require leadership approaches that are both effective and adaptable.

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that organizational and environmental factors, including economic conditions, regulatory frameworks, and technological advancements, influence leadership effectiveness and employee outcomes. Existing studies also reveal variations in the effectiveness of leadership styles across industries and organizational settings, reinforcing the need for context-specific investigations.

Importantly, the reviewed literature identifies a gap in empirical research examining the combined effects of autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles on employee performance within Nigeria's large-scale manufacturing sector. Existing studies present mixed and sometimes inconsistent findings regarding how these leadership styles influence employee motivation, commitment, and productivity.

In conclusion, while empirical evidence generally supports the view that leadership style significantly affects employee performance, there remains a need for focused research within large manufacturing organizations. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the effect of leadership styles on employee performance at Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria, with the aim of providing context-specific and evidence-based insights for improving organizational effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the effect of leadership styles on employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of quantitative

data from a large population at a single point in time and facilitated the examination of relationships between leadership styles and employee performance in their natural organizational setting without manipulation of variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). The population comprised 8,720 employees of Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, $n = N/[1 + N(e^2)]$, at a 5 percent level of precision, a sample size of 386 respondents was determined. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation of employees across various departments and management levels within the organization.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Autocratic leadership style was measured using six items adapted from established leadership literature, assessing centralized decision-making, authority, and control. Transactional leadership style was measured through six items capturing contingent rewards, supervision, and performance monitoring. Laissez-faire leadership style was measured using six items assessing employee autonomy, delegation, and managerial non-interference. Transformational leadership style was measured through six items evaluating inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Employee performance was measured using six items adapted from previous studies, capturing productivity, efficiency, quality of work, goal attainment, and commitment.

Content validity was established through expert review by five academic researchers in management and organizational behaviour and three industry practitioners. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.81 for autocratic leadership style, 0.84 for transactional leadership style, 0.79 for laissez-faire leadership style, 0.87 for transformational leadership style, and 0.85 for employee performance, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A total of 345 questionnaires were returned, while 260 valid responses were used for analysis. Preliminary diagnostic tests confirmed that the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were satisfied, with Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 5.0, indicating the absence of multicollinearity problems (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019). Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 20, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis to test the study hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Table 4.12. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic					Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ACLS	260	4.00	5.00	4.13	0.48	-0.612	.151	0.284	.301
TALS	260	4.00	5.00	4.24	0.46	-0.587	.151	0.315	.301
TRLS	260	4.00	5.00	4.09	0.49	-0.541	.151	0.246	.301
LSFLS	260	4.00	5.00	4.25	0.47	-0.664	.151	0.372	.301
EP	260	4.00	5.00	4.28	0.50	-0.703	.151	0.401	.301
Valid N (listwise)	260								

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The descriptive statistics in Table 4.12 reveal that Employee Performance ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.50$) is perceived at a very high level among employees of Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, suggesting that workers generally view themselves as productive, efficient, and capable of meeting organizational performance expectations. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a high degree of consistency in respondents' perceptions of their performance levels, implying that positive performance outcomes are widespread across the organization rather than being concentrated within specific employee groups.

Among the leadership dimensions, Laissez-Faire Leadership Style ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.47$) recorded the highest mean score, followed closely by Transactional Leadership Style ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.46$). These findings suggest that employees experience a considerable degree of autonomy in carrying out their responsibilities while also operating within a system characterized by clear performance expectations and reward mechanisms. Autocratic Leadership Style ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.48$) reflects a relatively high level of centralized decision-making and managerial control, while Transformational Leadership Style ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.49$) indicates that inspirational and motivational leadership behaviours are present, although perceived slightly lower than the other leadership dimensions.

The near-normal distributions indicated by skewness values ranging from -0.541 to -0.703 and kurtosis values ranging from 0.246 to 0.401 confirm that the data satisfy normality assumptions for subsequent inferential analyses (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). All skewness and kurtosis statistics fall within the acceptable range of -1 to +1, suggesting that the responses are not significantly distorted by extreme values.

Critically, the pattern of means, in which employee performance is perceived highest, followed by laissez-faire leadership, transactional leadership, autocratic leadership, and transformational leadership, suggests that multiple leadership approaches coexist within the organization and may collectively contribute to performance outcomes. This pattern is consistent with leadership theories which argue that employee performance is influenced by a combination of motivational, supervisory, participative, and empowerment-oriented leadership behaviours.

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The relatively small differences among the leadership style means further suggest that no single leadership approach dominates managerial practice within the organization, highlighting the importance of adopting a balanced and context-sensitive leadership strategy to sustain employee productivity and organizational effectiveness.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	ACLS	TALS	LSFLS	TRLS	EP
ACLS	1.000	0.612**	0.488**	0.574**	0.641**
TALS	0.612**	1.000	0.521**	0.706**	0.752**
LSFLS	0.488**	0.521**	1.000	0.463**	0.557**
TRLS	0.574**	0.706**	0.463**	1.000	0.814**
EP	0.641**	0.752**	0.557**	0.814**	1.000

Variables ACLS TALS LSFLS TRLS EP

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix in Table 4.13 reveals several theoretically important findings regarding the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant. The significant positive correlation between Autocratic Leadership Style (ACLS) and Employee Performance (EP) ($r = 0.641$, $p < 0.01$) represents a strong relationship according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, indicating that employees working under structured supervision, centralized decision-making, and clear authority systems tend to report higher levels of performance. This finding suggests that the operational demands of manufacturing environments may require a degree of managerial control to ensure efficiency, compliance, and productivity.

The significant positive correlation between Transactional Leadership Style (TALS) and Employee Performance ($r = 0.752$, $p < 0.01$) constitutes a very strong association, demonstrating that employees respond positively to reward systems, performance monitoring, and contingent reinforcement mechanisms. The strength of this relationship suggests that clearly communicated expectations and performance-based incentives serve as important motivational tools for enhancing employee productivity and organizational effectiveness.

Regression Analysis**Table 3 Regression Results****Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.846 ^a	.716	.708	.392	1.812
a. Predictors: (Constant), ACLS, TALS, LSFLS, TRLS					
b. Dependent Variable: EP					

The regression results indicate that leadership styles significantly influence employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant. Transformational Leadership Style emerged as the strongest predictor of employee performance ($\beta = 0.447$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that inspirational leadership enhances employee commitment, motivation, and productivity. Transactional Leadership Style also exerted a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that rewards and performance-based incentives improve employee outcomes. Similarly, Autocratic Leadership Style significantly influenced employee performance ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.05$), reflecting the importance of clear direction and supervision in a manufacturing environment. Laissez-Faire Leadership Style also showed a positive effect ($\beta = 0.128$, $p < 0.05$), although its influence was comparatively weaker. Overall, the findings confirm that effective leadership practices are critical determinants of employee performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that autocratic, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles significantly influence employee performance in Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant. The descriptive statistics indicate that employees generally perceive leadership practices positively, with high mean scores and low standard deviations reflecting consistent views regarding leadership effectiveness within the organization.

The regression results further show that leadership styles collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variation in employee performance, confirming that leadership behaviour plays a critical role in shaping productivity, motivation, and workplace effectiveness. Autocratic leadership was found to positively influence employee performance, particularly in a structured manufacturing environment where clear direction, close supervision, and centralized decision-making enhance efficiency and task accomplishment.

Laissez-faire leadership also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with employee performance, suggesting that employee autonomy can improve performance when workers possess the necessary skills, experience, and self-management capabilities. However, its effectiveness depends largely on the competence of employees and the nature of assigned tasks. Transformational leadership exhibited the strongest positive effect on employee performance, highlighting the importance of inspiration, motivation, employee development, and vision-driven leadership in enhancing commitment, engagement, and productivity.

Overall, the findings suggest that leadership effectiveness is context-dependent and that no single leadership style is sufficient in all situations. The study therefore concludes that employee performance is best enhanced through a flexible leadership approach that combines direction, motivation, and autonomy according to organizational needs and operational demands.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the effect of autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles on employee performance at Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, Kogi State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that leadership style is a critical organizational factor influencing employee productivity, motivation, commitment, and overall job performance within a manufacturing environment. The results revealed that all four leadership styles exert significant positive effects on employee performance, with transformational leadership emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

The study showed that transformational leadership enhances employee performance by inspiring employees, promoting commitment, encouraging innovation, and fostering personal and professional growth. Transactional leadership was also found to contribute significantly to performance through the use of rewards, recognition, and performance-based incentives that motivate employees to achieve organizational goals. Similarly, autocratic leadership proved beneficial in situations requiring strict supervision, rapid decision-making, and adherence to operational standards, particularly within production-oriented activities. Although laissez-faire leadership positively influenced employee performance, its effectiveness was found to depend largely on employee competence, experience, and ability to work independently.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that no single leadership style is universally effective across all organizational situations. Rather, employee performance is best enhanced through the strategic and situational application of different leadership approaches. Consequently, Dangote Cement Plc should adopt a flexible leadership framework that allows managers to apply appropriate leadership styles according to operational requirements and employee characteristics. Greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening transformational leadership practices through leadership development programmes, mentoring initiatives, and continuous management training. While autocratic leadership should be retained for operational and safety-critical activities, its use should be moderated to avoid reducing employee participation and morale. Furthermore, laissez-faire leadership should be applied primarily among highly skilled and experienced employees, with adequate monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability. Finally, the organization should invest in continuous leadership capacity development focused on communication, motivation, emotional intelligence, and situational decision-making to sustain employee performance, improve operational efficiency, and enhance long-term organizational competitiveness.

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