

Effect of Leadership Strategies on the Performance of Selected Construction Companies in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Nigeria construction companies are habitually lagging behind the project delivery standards even after several years of infrastructure investment, an issue that is associated with the lack of leadership strategy and not technical capability only. This study has investigated how leadership strategies influence project performance index of the sampled construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria. The quantitative cross-sectional design was employed and 399 respondents in four construction companies were sampled using structured questionnaires to be administered through stratified random sampling. Data analysis was carried out through multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that strategic planning intensity ($\beta=0.274$, $p=0.000$), participative decision-making level ($\beta=0.203$, $p=0.000$), leadership accountability systems ($\beta=0.331$, $p=0.000$), and innovation adoption rate ($\beta=0.158$, $p=0.002$) have significant positive impacts on the project performance index. The model accounts 69.4% of the variance in the performance of the projects. The study concludes that the most impactful factors of construction firm performance in Abuja are leadership accountability systems and strategic planning intensity. Construction companies ought to formalise accountability systems and participatory decision-making systems to enhance project delivery performance.*

Keywords: Leadership strategies, project performance, construction firms, strategic planning, accountability systems.

INTRODUCTION

The construction sector is a major contributor to the growth of infrastructure, creation of jobs and economic development in the developing countries. The sector maintains a major contribution of national output in Nigeria and it forms the core of infrastructure agenda of the Federal Government, especially in Abuja where the scale of public and private construction investment continues to rise. Notwithstanding such a strategic significance, construction companies in Nigeria perform poorly in project delivery qualities, there are constant cost escalations, time overruns, and quality shortfalls (Okonkwo et al., 2025). These are the consequences of organisational structural vices

that go beyond technical capability and directly to the quality of leadership strategies implemented in building companies. The importance of comprehending the role of leadership strategies in determining organisational performance in the industry is thus not only pragmatic but also academic.

The concept of leadership strategy is the planned management practice by which organisational leaders bring vision to quantifiable outcomes. These practices in construction are strategic planning, participative decision making, enforcing accountability, and implementing innovative processes and technologies. Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2020) determined that the dimensions of transformational leadership which were identified as inspiring followers and empowering employees are important predictors of teamwork performance in construction firms with a result of 26.7% of performance outcome variance. Likewise, Kalambayi et al. (2021) also established a statistically significant positive correlation between leadership styles and employee performance in South African construction companies, with transformational and democratic strategies generating the most significant performance increase. The results of these findings prove that the way leaders structure, motivate and guide their teams has direct and quantifiable effects on the results of the projects.

The scope of strategic leadership practices is not limited to interpersonal style but also includes systematized planning and communication. In Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023), structural equation modelling on 335 respondents working in government construction projects in Uganda showed that communication and participation as leadership strategies had a standardised coefficient of 0.840 with project success, which was measured using compliance with time, cost, and quality. Okeyo (2023) also established that strategic leadership practices of strategic direction and human capital development are strong predictors of organisational performance in family-owned construction businesses, as they accounted 16.6 % of variation in performance. These findings support the claim that the performance of construction firms is directly related to the ways leaders design the decision processes and institutional responsibility and not to leadership personality.

The leadership issues in the context of the Nigerian construction are peculiar and should be the subject of empirical study. Ajayi (2024) discovered that leadership styles in the local Abuja based engineers are heavily influenced by cultural diversity, resource constraints, leadership development, and organisational politics with cultural diversity having the highest influence at a beta coefficient of 0.331. According to Fafure et al. (2025), the relationship between skills transfer among construction managers in Lagos State can be explained by leadership strategies that focus on mentorship, emotional intelligence, and generational awareness (48.17). Ahaneku (2023) also determined, based on the construction companies in Imo State, Nigeria, that transformational and participative leadership approaches have beta coefficients of 0.775 and 0.735 on project performance respectively, and concluded that leadership strategy is the overriding internal factor of construction performance in the Nigerian setting.

The issue that this research is trying to deal with is both a contextual and empirical problem. The construction firms in Abuja are still registering unsatisfactory project performance results regardless of the augmented contract awards, government investment, and regulatory focus. Okonkwo et al. (2025) affirmed the positive correlation of 0.616 between project manager leadership competencies and project performance which are significantly high in Abuja and Kaduna, but pointed out that defining roles and creating accountability structures are in the critical stages of development. Iqbal et al. (2022) determined that leadership style is a strong and positive predictor of team performance in construction, with a correlation of 0.564, whereas Sankar and Anandh (2024) showed in a meta-analysis of 7,220 respondents that safety-related transformational leadership is the most effective in generating performance benefits in the world. In spite of this evidence, there are very few empirical studies that specifically focus on the impact of leadership strategies on the performance of construction firms in Abuja. Rotimi et al. (2021) reported that passive leadership and lack of formal accountability are the most effective discouraging factors to worker performance in the construction industry, which directly applies to the Abuja situation. As Loeung (2024) confirmed, transformational leadership has the highest statistical prediction of employee performance in construction, with a beta of 0.672. This is therefore an empirical research on how intensity of strategic planning, level of participative decision-making, leadership accountability systems and the rate of innovation adoption influence the project performance index of the chosen construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of strategic planning intensity on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.
2. To assess the effect of participative decision-making level on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.
3. To determine the effect of leadership accountability systems on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.
4. To evaluate the effect of innovation adoption rate on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: Strategic planning intensity has no significant effect on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

Ho2: Participative decision-making level has no significant effect on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

Ho3: Leadership accountability systems have no significant effect on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

Ho4: Innovation adoption rate has no significant effect on the project performance index of selected construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

The leadership strategy is a planned organisational device under which top managers coordinate individuals, procedures and resources in line with set performance objectives. The leadership approach in construction companies goes beyond the personal management approach to include coordinated planning, participative decision-making, accountability enforcement and application of technological developments throughout the project cycles. Okeyo (2023) described strategic leadership as practices whereby organisational leaders offer directives, build human capitals, and institutionalise ethical accountability and stated that the practices taken together define the performance results in the construction settings. The definition places the leadership strategy as a multi-dimensional concept and not a single behavioural attribute, which is the key point to note why construction firms that have technically competent managers still experience poor project performance when there is no strategic leadership systems.

The first and most basic leadership strategy dimension in construction firms is strategic planning intensity. It is used to describe the degree to which leaders codify project goals, the match between long-term goals and operational cycles, and the institutionalisation of goal-setting practices within project groups. Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023) theorised strategic planning in leadership as the process where leaders explain directions, expectations and assign roles so that project stakeholders can head to stipulated directions. In the absence of this foundation of planning, the construction projects experience scope ambiguity, misintegration of resources and schedule drift which directly undermine the project performance.

The level of participative decision-making is a measure of how much leaders engage team members in planning, problem-solving and operational decisions. This dimension indicates a transition to participative leadership of inclusive management whereby site-level and supervisory workers bring with them experience that enhances the quality of decisions. Kalambayi et al. (2021) determined that the outcomes of employee performance are much higher in construction companies in which democratic and transformational leadership practices are deployed with participation as a key characteristic, and the regression coefficients can verify the positive directional impact. Participative decision-making is particularly important in construction contexts, where site-level workers possess technical knowledge that supervisors and project managers do not always hold, making bottom-up information flow a performance asset rather than merely a motivational tool.

Leadership accountability systems are the availability of formal performance monitoring structures, responsibility tracking mechanisms, and reporting structures that are found in project organisations. Okonkwo et al. (2025) have identified that role definition, expectation communication, and trust creation are some of the most relevant leadership competencies that determine the performance of construction projects, and all five dimensions of competencies were positively associated with seven performance criteria. These competencies are operationalised into institutional structures through accountability systems that continue through project cycles and personnel changing activities to make performance expectations monitored and enforced and not assumed.

The rate of innovation adoption is the indicator of how much the leaders of construction firms incorporate modern technologies, digital tools, and improvements in the process of project delivery. Fafure et al. (2025) determined that the benefits of leadership strategies with a focus on organised knowledge transfer and adaptive management practices are crucial to the continuation of innovation in the Nigerian construction companies. The dependent variable of this research is project performance index, which measures cost efficiency, timeline adherence, quality compliance, and client satisfaction as a composite measure of output of construction firms. Rotimi et al. (2021) affirmed that the construction workers perceive the performance outcome to be the most effective when transformational leadership attributes exist, which supports the argument that project performance is a direct process of leadership strategy environment in which project teams work.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies of leadership strategies and performance of construction firms have been conducted across diverse national settings, and their results indicate that the directional relationships are consistent, but that significant differences exist in both magnitude and mechanism of effect. In their review of the impact of transformational leadership on teamwork performance, Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2020) studied 120 large construction firms based in Malaysia and discovered that the factors of inspiring followers and empowering employees were highly predictive of teamwork performance. The regression model of the study explained 26.7% of the variance in the performance criterion variable, and as such, the dimensions of transformational leadership are predictable measures of construction output and not abstract motivational ideas. This result formed an empirical basis of leadership strategies as measurable sources of performance in project-based companies.

Kalambayi et al. (2021) explored the effect of leadership styles on the performance of employees in Cape Town construction companies in South Africa and received 377 responses based on structured questionnaires. The research methods adopted ANOVA, regression and correlation analysis, which have revealed statistically significant positive correlation between the leadership styles of the project managers and employee performance and a correlation coefficient of $r=1.000$. Transformational and democratic styles yielded positive coefficients of regression and transactional and autocratic styles yielded negative coefficients. The study presented a conceptual framework where training, empowerment, coaching, participation and delegation were put in the structural facilitator of the quality of leadership, which reinforced the argument that leadership strategy is working through institutional practices, rather than personality traits.

Rotimi et al. (2021) examined the relationship between leadership traits of managers and the worker performance outcomes in the New Zealand construction industry by collecting data about 136 workers. The correlation of study employed Pearson correlation and multiple regression to conclude that the relationship between all the measured attributes of leadership and performance outcomes was significant and positive with transformational leadership being identified as the

most outstanding style employed by managers. Notably, management by exception passive and laissez-faire leadership was one of the largest performance discouragement and effectiveness has the largest mean outcome score of 2.67. This finding is directly relevant to the Abuja context, where passive and unstructured leadership practices remain prevalent in construction project management.

Through questionnaires and secondary project files of construction companies, Ahaneku (2023) examined how the leadership skills and styles of project managers influenced performance of construction projects in Imo State, Nigeria. The multiple regression analysis gave a correlation of $R=0.891$ at a significance of 0.000 where transformational leadership was given a beta of 0.775 and participative leadership was given a beta of 0.735 on the project performance. These findings put Nigeria in the bigger global trend whereby leadership strategy is the most dominant internal predictor of construction outcomes in the local environment. The research also determined that the leadership competency dimensions of professional expertise and effective communication have a substantial predictive power on project performance, which supports the multi-dimensional nature of the leadership-performance relationship.

Having analysed the data of 335 respondents and 100 projects in Uganda, Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023) studied the role of leadership styles in government construction project success, through the structural equation modelling method. The conceptualisation of leadership in the study was communication and participation, the standardised beta of which on the project success measured in terms of time, cost, and quality was 0.840. This finding validates the fact that the participative decision-making and the effectiveness of communication as two dimensions of leadership strategy have the strongest quantifiable impact on the performance of construction projects when studied using the rigorous structural modelling. The Path-Goal Theory conceptualisation of this research also provided further evidence that leaders who articulate paths and align strategies with project environments yield the most reliable performance benefits.

Okeyo (2023) analysed 78 responses on strategic leadership practices and organisational performance of family owned construction companies in Kisumu City, Kenya through regression analysis. It was in the study that the practices of strategic leadership elaborated 16.6% of performance variance; research and development orientation were viewed as the most practiced practices. This evidence confirms that structured strategic orientation at the leadership level translates into measurable performance differentials, even in small and medium construction firms where leadership tends to be centralised and informal. Iqbal et al. (2022) obtained complementary evidence in Pakistan, revealing a positive and significant connection amidst the leadership style and team performance in the construction sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the Pearson correlation of $r=0.564$ by 202 construction employees. The research established that leadership is an important factor that could lead to the attainment of objectives in the construction sector and structured guidance without pressure was the highest mean leadership item.

Ajayi (2024) investigated how cultural diversity, resource constraint, development of leadership styles, and organisational politics affected the leadership styles of local engineers in construction companies in Abuja, Nigeria. The study used multiple linear regression of 150 survey respondents and established that all the four contextual variables were significant predictors of leadership styles with cultural diversity showing the highest influence with a beta of 0.331. This observation is of great significance to the current research because it ascertains that the leadership strategy in Abuja construction firms is determined by the unique local factors that are not adequately represented in generic leadership models. A similar confirmation of transformational leadership as the strongest statistical predictor of employee performance was made in Cambodia by Loeung (2024) who found a beta of 0.672, and in construction safety performance was found to be the strongest predictor by Sankar and Anandh (2024) with a beta of 0.65. All these cross-national results lead to the same conclusion that better performance outcomes in all contexts of the construction industry are always predicted by accountability-related, participative, and structured leadership strategies.

Equally, Fafure et al. (2025) investigated the effectiveness of leadership styles in enhancing transfer of skills among construction managers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The analysis found mentorship programmes to explain 48.17% of variance of transfer of skills, followed by emotional intelligence and generational awareness. This evidence establishes that innovation-oriented leadership practices, including knowledge transfer and adaptive management, carry measurable performance consequences that extend beyond immediate project metrics to long-term organisational capability. Okonkwo et al. (2025) provided the most geographically proximate evidence, collecting data from construction professionals in Abuja and Kaduna and confirming a significant positive correlation of 0.616 between project manager leadership competencies and overall project performance across seven performance criteria. Defining roles and establishing trust were identified as the most critical leadership competencies, directly aligning with the accountability and participative decision-making dimensions that this study examines.

Theoretical Review

This study relied on the Path-Goal Theory of leadership as its main theoretical basis. The theory, created by House (1996), suggests that the key role of a leader is to explain the direction, in which the followers have to move to reach the set objectives, eliminate challenges, and ensure the support and encouragement needed to work. The theory recognises four styles of leadership behaviours, directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented, which are manipulated by the leaders depending on the circumstances and the attributes of the followers. The Path-Goal Theory is a better explanatory model in construction environments where task complexity, team heterogeneity and project uncertainty are always high and in which the various leadership strategies result in different performance outcomes in project situations.

Path-Goal Theory is especially appropriate to the study since the main propositions of this theory are directly correlated with the four independent variables in the study. The structural equation modelling research of government construction project success, by Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023), was based on the explicit application of Path-Goal Theory and the researchers discovered

that communication and participation as leadership behaviours yielded a beta of 0.840 on project success, which supports the predictive power of the theory in construction contexts. The theory describes how the strategic planning intensity as a directive leadership practice will decrease path ambiguity and enhance goal clarity of the project. The participatory behaviour aspect of the theory, termed participative decision-making, enhances follower motivation and commitment because team knowledge is used in goal-setting activities. The achievement oriented aspect of the theory is operationalised through leadership accountability systems which instigates high performance standards and entails monitoring systems, which maintain effort and quality of output across project periods.

The second theoretical perspective based on this study is the Transformational Leadership Theory. Bass (1985) as cited in Rotimi et al. (2021) determined that transformational leaders generate surpassed performance by addressing higher-order needs of followers and building intrinsic motivation. Basing their construction industry research on the Transformational Leadership Theory, Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2020) explicitly justified their choice and proved that the ability to inspire the followers and empower employees is one of the key predictors of teamwork performance. The theory directly describes the relationship between the rate of innovation adoption and the performance gain as one of the leadership strategy dimensions and the creation of the organisational culture that places value on learning, improvement, and technological advancement. Path-Goal Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory are complementary explanatory theories, as the former describes how well-organized leadership behaviors can steer teams toward performance objectives, and the latter describes how inspirational and empowerment-oriented approaches can help improve performance quality in construction firm settings well beyond the expectations of the low performance benchmarks.

Literature Gap

The empirical findings reviewed support the claim that there is a positive relationship between leadership strategies and the performance of construction firms in various national and regional settings. Research articles by Okonkwo et al. (2025), Ahaneku (2023), and Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023), to name a few, collectively identify that participative decision-making, accountability design, and strategic communication have significant predictive value on the outcome of project performance. In spite of this body of evidence, there are still a number of major gaps that the current research specifically aims to fill.

First, the geographic scope of the current research weakens the external validity of the results to the Nigerian urban construction environment. Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2020) used Malaysian evidence, Kalambayi et al. (2021) South African evidence, and Rotimi et al. (2021) New Zealand evidence. Although both works by Ajayi (2024) and Okonkwo et al. (2025) took place in Nigeria, neither of these studies has focused on leadership strategies as a multi-dimensional construct that functions jointly on a project performance index among construction firms in Abuja, in particular. The Abuja construction market is regulated, culturally, and resource-wise in a different way that cannot be adequately reflected in the previous studies.

Second, the majority of available literature focuses on a single dimension of leadership styles, usually transformational or transactional behaviour, instead of a joint analysis of the impact of the intensity of strategic planning, level of participative decision-making, the leadership accountability system, and the rate of innovation adoption on performance as a system. This limitation was accepted by Fafure et al. (2025) and Iqbal et al. (2022), who said that single-variable leadership models generate limited results, which do not capture the complexity of operations in a construction project setting.

Furthermore, the dependent variable in most of the previous studies minimizes performance to employee-level performance including team performance or worker satisfaction, and does not assess firm-level project performance using a composite index. According to Okeyo (2023), this gap in measurement was cited as a major methodological flaw of the literature on leadership-performance. The current research fills all the three gaps using the available empirical study testing a multi-dimensional leadership approach model against a composite project performance index in Abuja construction companies.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in the study is quantitative cross-sectional research, which the researcher intends to employ in testing the impact of leadership strategies on the project performance index of chosen construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria. The cross-sectional design allows the researcher to get a sample of several respondents at one time and gives objective measures that can be used in testing the hypothesised relations statistically. The design is suitable since the four firms are subjected to similar regulatory and contractual environments in Abuja, and therefore, inter-firm comparisons are methodologically valid. The quantitative method is consistent with the positivist epistemological orientation of the study, where the leadership strategy and project performance are handled as measurable constructs, the relationships between which can be confirmed with the help of inferential analysis. The design is also made to reduce the researcher bias by ensuring that data collection processes are standardised across project offices, supervisory levels and decision-making roles within each of the firms.

The target population will be the employees of four chosen construction companies based in Abuja, Nigeria, and offering a total of 7,626 employees. Dantata and Sawoe provide 3,908 employees, Arab Contractors provide 3,097 employees, Urban Shelter provide 296 employees and Cosgroove Construction provide 325 employees. The project managers, site engineers, supervisors and technical staff are included in the population, and they have direct responsibility to control the costs, schedule, quality and co-ordination of the stakeholders. These types of employees work in active project cycles, and thus are in the best position to evaluate the influence of strategic planning intensity, level of participation in decision making, the system of leadership accountability, and the rate of innovation adoption on the performance outcomes of projects in their respective organisations.

The sample size is determined using the Taro Yamane formula, expressed as $n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$, where N represents the total population of 7,626 employees and e represents a 5% margin of error. This formula yields a sample size of 399 respondents. The sample is distributed proportionately across the four firms based on their respective workforce sizes. Dantata and Sawoe contribute the largest share, followed by Arab Contractors, while Urban Shelter and Cosgroove Construction contribute smaller proportions consistent with their workforce sizes. The study employs a stratified random sampling technique, in which the four firms constitute the strata and simple random sampling operates within each stratum. This procedure ensures balanced organisational representation and supports accurate comparison of leadership practices and performance outcomes across both large and small construction firms.

The research utilizes a structured questionnaire based on standardised scales, which are used to assess the intensity of strategic planning, level of participative decision making, the accountability systems of the leaders, the rate of adoption of innovation, and the project performance index. The measurement of each construct is done through five-point Likert scale items with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The composite indicators are cost efficiency, timeline compliance, quality compliance and client satisfaction, which are captured by project performance items. The questionnaire is administered by trained research assistants who conduct the physical distribution of the questionnaire in the project offices of the four firms and collect the completed questionnaire within the set time constraints. The respondents fill the instrument when they are in the working hours so that they can have the opportunity to recall the leadership experiences and the outcomes of a project properly.

The validity of the content is achieved by conducting an expert review by specialists in the field of construction management and organisational behaviour to evaluate clarity, relevance, and congruence of each item with the constructs of the study. The results of this review process are used to revise unclear or technically inaccurate items, which are then administered. The reliability is evaluated with the help of pilot test with the help of a smaller sample of respondents who are not included to the main sample. The alpha coefficients of the constructs are calculated and a value of 0.70 is taken as an indication of satisfactory internal consistency. The items that indicate alpha values less than this are updated or eliminated before the actual study begins.

The study applies both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarise the demographic profile of respondents and the central tendency of each variable. Multiple regression analysis tests the strength and significance of the effect of each independent variable on the project performance index. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity verify that the regression model meets the required assumptions before interpretation. Results are interpreted at a 5% level of significance. The regression model, adapted from Okonkwo et al. (2025), who used multiple regression to estimate leadership competency effects on project performance in Nigerian construction firms, is specified as follows:

$$PPI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SPI + \beta_2 PDL + \beta_3 LAS + \beta_4 IAR + \varepsilon$$

Where: PPI = Project Performance Index, measured as a composite of cost efficiency, timeline adherence, quality compliance, and client satisfaction. SPI = Strategic Planning Intensity. PDL = Participative Decision-Making Level. LAS = Leadership Accountability Systems. IAR = Innovation Adoption Rate. β_0 = Intercept. β_1 to β_4 = Regression coefficients indicating the direction and magnitude of each relationship. ε = Error term capturing unexplained variation in the model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic of the respondents who were selected among four chosen construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria. The sample is composed of 74.4 % men, which reflects well the gender makeup of the Nigerian construction industry where site-based and management positions are still dominated by men. The age bracket of 31-40 years is the largest group with 41.6 % of respondents and 41 to 50 years group is the second largest with 28.3 %. This age composition validates an old work force that has enough exposure to professional practice in leadership and project implementation requirements. The level of education demonstrates that 58.4% of the respondents have HND or BSc degrees, and 41.6% have postgraduate degrees, which means that the sample has sufficient technical and managerial proficiency to assess the leadership strategy aspects and project performance results. The highest concentration of work experience lies in the 6 to 10 years product with 42.1 %, with 35.6% of the experience being above 10 years. Such distribution substantiates the fact that most of the respondents have maintained experience working in construction project settings which serves as a viable foundation to evaluate the intensity of strategic planning, level of participative decision making, accountability systems of the leadership and the rate of adoption of innovation to influence project performance outcomes.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	%age (%)
Gender		

Male	297	74.4
Female	102	25.6
Age		
21-30 Years	79	19.8
31-40 Years	166	41.6
41-50 Years	113	28.3
Above 50 Years	41	10.3
Educational Qualification		
HND/BSc	233	58.4
MSc and Above	166	41.6
Work Experience		
1-5 Years	89	22.3
6-10 Years	168	42.1
Above 10 Years	142	35.6
Total	399	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

All the descriptive statistics of the five constructs are summarised in Table 2. The mean score of the Leadership accountability systems is 4.06 and the standard deviation of 0.54, which means that the respondents report formal accountability and performance monitoring structures as the most uniform leadership strategy dimension within their firms. The intensity of strategic planning follows with a mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.59 which is a strong but moderately variable adoption of formal planning practices. The mean and standard deviation of 3.85 and 0.62 respectively indicate that the level of participation of employees in project decisions is common in the sampled firms. The lowest mean of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.66 indicates that innovation adoption is the least applied across the project sites, although it is used unequally. The project performance index have an average of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.57 which is relatively satisfactory on the cost efficiency, timeline compliance, quality compliance, and client satisfaction. The lowest and highest values ensure that there is enough variation in responses to facilitate strong regression estimation.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Regression Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Strategic Planning Intensity	3.97	0.59	2.05	5.00
Participative Decision-Making Level	3.85	0.62	2.10	5.00
Leadership Accountability Systems	4.06	0.54	2.25	5.00
Innovation Adoption Rate	3.71	0.66	1.95	5.00
Project Performance Index	3.91	0.57	2.20	5.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 3 presents the multiple regression estimates for the effect of leadership strategies on the project performance index. Leadership accountability systems record the largest coefficient of 0.331, with a t-value of 6.12 and a p-value of 0.000, identifying it as the strongest individual predictor of project performance among the four strategy dimensions. This result supports the rejection of the third null hypothesis. Strategic planning intensity records a coefficient of 0.274

with a t-value of 5.23 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a strong and statistically significant positive effect on performance and supporting the rejection of the first null hypothesis. Participative decision-making level produces a coefficient of 0.203 with a t-value of 3.87 and a p-value of 0.000, establishing that inclusive decision processes generate a meaningful and positive effect on the project performance index and supporting the rejection of the second null hypothesis. Innovation adoption rate records the smallest coefficient of 0.158, with a t-value of 3.19 and a p-value of 0.002, confirming a positive and statistically significant effect on performance, though of lower magnitude than the remaining predictors, and supporting the rejection of the fourth null hypothesis. The constant term of 0.374 is significant at $p=0.004$. All four null hypotheses are therefore rejected at the 5% level of significance.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Constant	0.374	0.129	2.90	0.004
Strategic Planning Intensity	0.274	0.052	5.23	0.000
Participative Decision-Making Level	0.203	0.052	3.87	0.000
Leadership Accountability Systems	0.331	0.054	6.12	0.000
Innovation Adoption Rate	0.158	0.050	3.19	0.002

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4 reports the regression diagnostic statistics confirming full model adequacy and assumption compliance. The R-squared value of 0.694 indicates that the four leadership strategy dimensions jointly explain 69.4% of the variation in the project performance index. The adjusted R-squared of 0.686 confirms model stability after adjustment for the number of predictors. The F-statistic of 88.63 at p-value below 0.001 confirms the joint statistical significance of the model. Variance Inflation Factor values ranging from 1.38 to 1.74 confirm the absence of multicollinearity among the predictors. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.03 confirms residual independence and the absence of autocorrelation. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test returns a p-value of 0.093, confirming that the residuals follow a normal distribution. The Breusch-Pagan test produces a p-value of 0.231, confirming homoscedastic residuals and validating the robustness of all regression estimates.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Diagnostics

Diagnostic Test	Value
R-squared	0.694
Adjusted R-squared	0.686
F-statistic	88.63
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	1.38 - 1.74
Durbin-Watson Statistic	2.03
Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	$p = 0.093$
Breusch-Pagan Test	$p = 0.231$

Source: Field Survey, 2026

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The regression findings affirm that the strategic planning intensity has a positive impact on the project performance index of construction firms in Abuja. This result is in line with Okeyo (2023), who determined that the strategic leadership practices, such as structured direction-setting and human capital development, are the factors that predict the organisational performance in construction businesses significantly. The finding is also supportive of Ssenyange and Kudakwashe (2023), whose structural equation modelling of government construction projects in Uganda revealed that structured leadership planning practices did generate strong measurable effects on project success in terms of time, cost, and quality indicators. In the context of construction companies in Abuja, this fact confirms the notion that leaders who institutionalise formal planning cycles, match long-term goals and project schedules and implement goal-setting processes at all operational levels generate objectively better project outcomes.

It should be noted that the long-standing trend of cost overruns and schedule failures reported within the Nigerian construction companies, to a large extent, is a manifestation of the lack of disciplined strategic planning among the leadership and not merely the lack of technical capacity. This observation has a direct bearing on the owners of construction firms and top managers, who need to consider strategic planning as part of core leadership operation and not an administrative formality, and on the industry regulators who shape the contractor performance evaluation models. The level of participative decision-making also has a strong positive impact on the project performance index, which is also in line with Ahaneku (2023), who discovered that participative leadership is one of the most significant predictors of performance in construction projects in Nigeria. Kalambayi et al. (2021) also made similar findings that democratic and participative leadership styles have positive impacts on employee performance within the construction companies in South Africa, whereas autocratic styles have detrimental effects. Rotimi et al. (2021) also established that passive and non-participative leadership qualities are the most significant workers performance detractors in the construction industry, which confirms the directional consistency of the current study finding. These similar findings in various African construction scenarios support the thesis that inclusive decision-making frameworks minimize coordinating failure, enhance responsiveness at the site, and enhance worker devotion to project aims. To construction organisations in Abuja where team composition diversity and multi-stakeholder project setting is common, this observation suggests that project managers need to institutionalise formal team consultation activities instead of using centralised commanding models, and that participative leadership should be institutionalised as a guiding competency in training programmes on site manager skills.

The responsibility systems of the leadership become the most effective predictor of project performance in this research, which Okonkwo et al. (2025) confirm directly. Their research on construction professionals in Abuja and Kaduna validated that defining roles, communicating expectations and creating trust are the most essential leadership skills that predict performance on various project criteria. Fafure et al. (2025) also found that the use of structured leadership practices anchored on mentorship, expectation-setting, and management support explain a significant %age of skills transfer and performance returns in Nigerian construction companies.

The combination of this evidence places leadership accountability not as a fringe issue of governance but as the most operationally significant aspect of leadership strategy within construction settings. The implication on the construction companies is straightforward: organisations would have to invest on formal performance tracking systems, clear responsibility assignment guidelines as well as systematic reporting systems in the project teams. Leadership accountability requirements should be included in the prequalification requirements of the contractors and project supervision requirements in policy maker of the public construction contracts in Abuja.

Although the innovation adoption rate has the least impact of the four predictors, it has a significant positive impact on the project performance index, which affirms that the integration of technology and process improvement have a significant impact on the outcome of construction firms. Loeung (2024) determined transformational leadership, the statistical predictor of employee performance in construction that is inherently promotional of innovation and learning, and Sankar and Anandh (2024) validated through a global meta-analysis that leaders who actively facilitate cultures of structured improvement have a more consistent high-performing outcome across the range of construction situations.

In the same vein, Tabassi and Abu Bakar (2020) also discovered that encouraging followers to transcend practice and empowering employees to embrace new practices were the strongest predictors of teamwork performance in construction companies. This conclusion, as applied to construction companies based in Abuja, means that the leaders of the companies in question will have to go beyond the traditional construction methods and become an advocate of digital tools, process optimization, and technology-enhanced project management systems. The finding to policy makers highlights the need to develop regulatory and procurement incentives that will reward the adoption of innovation amongst construction contractors especially in the infrastructure projects which are funded by the Federal Capital Territory government.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored how leadership strategies impact on project performance index of the selected construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria. Four dimensions of leadership strategy, including: strategic planning intensity, the level of participative decision-making, leadership accountability systems, and the rate of innovation adoption, were tested against a composite project performance index, which encompassed cost efficiency, timeline adherence, quality compliance, and client satisfaction. This regression model accounted 69.4 % of the variance in the project performance, and all the four predictors were recorded to produce statistically significant positive impacts. The best impact was on leadership accountability systems then strategic planning intensity, level of participative decision-making and rate of innovation adoption. All the four null hypotheses were rejected at the 5% level of significance and diagnostic tests were used to prove the robustness of the model, the normality of residuals, lack of multicollinearity and homoscedastic error terms.

Findings of this study attest to the fact that leadership approaches are a significant and a significant element of project execution among construction firms that are headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria. Independent contributions to the performance outcomes are positive and significant by each leadership accountability system, strategic planning intensity, participative decision-making, and innovation adoption as it can be concluded that none of the dimensions of leadership is sufficient on its own. Its findings are in line with the postulations of Path-Goal Theory, according to which structured, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership behaviours enhance the performance of followers by eliminating barriers, creating clarity, and maintaining accountability. Abuja construction firms that embrace the integrated approach in the leadership strategy frameworks will be in a better position of delivering projects within the required quality, within the budget, and on time.

Thus, the managers of construction firms working in Abuja ought to institutionalise formal leadership accountability systems, that is, organized monitoring of performance, definite role allocation, and open reporting systems in all project teams, because they have the highest measurable positive effect on project performance. Organisations must invest in systematic leadership development programmes that help develop strategic planning, participative decision making, and technology adoption skills in project managers and site supervisors. Leadership strategy evaluation should be incorporated in contractor prequalification and performance evaluation systems administered by the Federal Capital Development Authority and other authorities that supervise construction in Abuja. The Nigerian construction industry associations ought to come up with standardised leadership competency standards that can be embraced by firms in order to enhance the consistency of project delivery on both the public and the private contracts.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The research was based on the four dimensions of leadership strategy in the selected construction firms in Abuja, and the cross-sectional quantitative design was applied. Subsequently, the geographical scope of the research needs to be broadened to cover construction companies in other states in Nigeria, specifically Lagos, Kano and Port Harcourt where construction is active and the regulatory environment is vastly different as compared to the Federal Capital Territory. Longitudinal research designs would enhance causation inference as it would monitor the effects of changes in dimensions of leadership strategies to result in changes in the performance of projects over a period. The moderating effects of the organisational culture as well as the firm size to the leadership strategy- performance relationship should also be studied because the situational factors are likely to either magnify or diminish the impacts that have been recorded in this case. Future research should incorporate qualitative methodologies to capture the lived leadership experiences of site workers and project managers, providing depth that quantitative regression models cannot generate. Additionally, scholars should investigate the mediating role of employee motivation and organisational commitment between leadership strategies and project performance outcomes in Nigerian construction firms.

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