BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCES'
AS AN EFFECTIVE FACTOR FOR PROJECT LEADERS IN THE LIBYAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The construction industry has focused mainly on management, and not on leadership. This is probably the reason construction project managers are not perceived as leaders and are mostly termed as managers. This paper is investigated on how behavioral competences can contribute to an effective leadership in the construction companies in Libya. Questionnaire was carried out by getting feedback from various ranged construction companies in Libya. Of 280 distributed questionnaires, two hundred and fifty five (255) useable questionnaires (91% response rate) were received and analyzed. This study has found that behavioral competences for both social/vocational and intraprofessional factors are shown to be positively significant only with the strategy management system of the participating companies.

Keywords: *Behavioural competency, project leader, effectiveness, construction industry, Libya.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been an interesting topic for analysts and philosophers since ancient times (Müller and Turner, 2010). In contrast, researchers such as Daft (2005) state that scientific research on leadership began only in the 20th century. Scholars and researchers have proposed more than 350 explanations for leadership. In 1978, one authority on the subject, James MacGregor Burns, concluded that leadership "is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth". Clarifying leadership has been a complicated and difficult problem, largely because its nature itself is complicated. Accordingly, different definitions of a leader and leadership are espoused by various researchers. For instance, Cole (1996) defines leadership as a dynamic process in which one individual influences others to contribute to the achievement of the group task. People who respond to the leadership process perceive this influence as fully legitimate. Murphy (1996) defines leaders as people "to whom others turn when missions

need to be upheld, breakthroughs made and performance goals reached on time and within budget".   Murphy further opines that leaders "transcend the problems of the moment to reveal the possibilities of human nature through intelligence and perseverance". Hickman (1992) adds that competitive advantage stems from the way the organization is managed and led by its leaders.

Daft (2005) considers leadership as both an art and a science. It is an art because many leadership skills, abilities, and qualities cannot be learned from books. Leadership takes practice and hands-on experience, as well as intense personal exploration and development. However, leadership is also a science because a growing body of knowledge and objective describes the leadership process and the way in which leadership skills attain organizational goals. Bennis and Townsend (1995) have restated their famous but controversial statement that "leaders are people who do the right things and managers are people who do things right". Leaders are interested in direction, vision, goals, objective, intention, purpose, and effectiveness or doing the right things. In contrast, managers are interested in efficiency or the how-to, the day-to-day, and the short run of doing things right. Leadership is an influential relationship among leaders and followers who aim for real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes (Rost and Barker, 2000).

2.0 Behavioral Competence of Leadership

The next category of leadership skill requirements is referred to as interpersonal skill requirements because they involve both interpersonal and social skills relating to interacting with and influencing others (Katz, 1974; Marks et al., 2000). This category grows out of what previous research refers to as social capacities (Zaccaro, 2001) social judgment (Mumford, Marks et al., 2000), social complexity and differentiation (Hooijberg et al., 1997) and human relation skills (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Interpersonal skills involve social perceptiveness (Graham, 1983; Mintzberg, 1973; Yukl, 1989) to allow for an awareness of the reactions of others and understanding of why they react the way they do. The interpersonal category of leadership skill requirements also includes skills required for the coordination of actions of oneself and others (Gillen and Carroll, 1985; Mumford, Marks et al., 2000); negotiation skills to reconcile the differences among employee perspectives and to establish mutually satisfying relationships (Copeman, 1971; Mahoney, Jerdee, and Carroll, 1963; Mahoney et al., 1965; Mintzberg, 1973); and persuasion skills to influence others to accomplish organizational objectives more effectively (Katz, 1974; Mintzberg, 1973; Yukl, 1989). When formulating their theory of authentic leadership development, Luthans and Avolio (2003) begin with a discussion on how "leaders at all levels and types of organizations are facing the challenge of declining hope and confidence in themselves and their associates". The kind of leadership that can restore confidence comes from individuals who are "true to themselves" and whose transparency "positively transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves" (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). From the transformational leadership perspective, authenticity serves as a moral compass by which the intentions of transformational leaders can be determined (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Therefore, for these authors, when transformational leadership is "true to self and others, it is characterized by high moral and ethical standards".

The construction industry has focused mainly on management, and not on leadership. This is probably the reason construction project managers are not perceived as leaders and are mostly termed as managers (Russell and Stouffer, 2003). Their day-to-day work involves management

of activities and achievement of the short-term goals of the project, such as conforming to the set budget, schedule, and quality. They are focused on the end goals and not the means to achieve the results. This mindset in construction project management makes the managers more production-oriented rather than relationship-oriented. They mostly end up managing their teams and their day-to-day work, rather than leading their people to achieve long-term objectives.

A study by Black and Porter (2000) indicates that traits are useful only when converted into behavior. As a result, they identify two distinct categories of leadership behavior. The first category refers to task- or production-orientated leadership, also termed as initiating structure. The second is people- or socio-emotional-oriented leadership, also referred to as relationship-oriented (Black and Porter, 2000). Task- or production-oriented leadership focuses on behavior such as planning of work schedules, performance standards, and production design (Black and Porter, 2000). Relationship-oriented leadership involves people and has a more socio-emotional approach. This type of leadership engages relationship behavior such as support, cooperation, display of trust and confidence in workers, as well as recognition of their achievements and concern for their welfare (Black and Porter, 2000). Although, presumably, effective leadership would necessitate high levels of performance in both categories, this has not been strongly supported by research. Effective leaders appear to demonstrate only moderate levels of both types of behavior, whereas subordinates are assumed to be more satisfied with leaders with high socio-emotional behavior (Black and Porter, 2000). This finding has implications for feminized leadership, which is often aligned with strong socio-emotional skills. However, this implication remains contentious (Black and Porter, 2000). A leader is anyone who directs and controls a group of people in order to achieve a set purpose (Hicks and Gullet, 1975). However a social organization has many leaders operating at the same time. These leaders may be rivals; however, they share the various leadership functions of planning, directing, reviewing, and coordinating, among others. Circumstances may cause changes in leadership patterns, thereby leading to the classifications of leadership based on how this leadership is performed (Hicks and Gullet, 1975). Furthermore, Hicks and Gullet (1975) identify two types of leaders:

Unofficial leader: This leader is often not important in an organization, although the power ascribed to him or her may rise or fall.

Official leader: The individual holding this position is officially given charge over the subordinates who should be directed and controlled. These subordinates need to be led to value the rewards they obtain from work, which can be in the form of cash (money), friendship, status, approval, or a combination of any of these. In most cases, official leaders can be called supervisors or managers, and they reserve the power to reward or punish.

To a lesser extent, the success of such leadership depends on experience and virtuosity; however, but to a greater extent, success continues to depend on the management style of the leader. According to Goldman (2006) early writers were of the opinion that leaders or managers are born and not made; they come from a specific family or lineage. Therefore, there is only one specific from of leadership style. Given this, the existence of a vast number of studies on how people acquire leadership abilities is unquestionable. However, the Aristocrats believe that leadership is inbred (in the blood), similar to the monarchy. Most known works attempt to describe leadership act and techniques, theorize why leaders emerge, and understand people and the dynamics of interpersonal relations. However, teaching this process can be

difficult because of the fact that leadership is a dynamic personal process (Gerhard, 2002). It is dynamic because it varies with the circumstances and individuals involved. It is also said to be personal because of the interpersonal influences allowed. However, this does not necessarily connote a direct contact between the leader and his or her subordinates. In business, excellent leadership ability is rare. This may partly be because great ability is rare. Employees can work without zeal and may be unable to handle changes; subordinates can also be lazy or be hindered by a union (Budhwar and Yaw, 2001). In such a situation, a manager does not need to use much leadership; therefore, he or she may depend on negative motivation and authority to command (Budhwar and Yaw, 2001). Budhwar and Yaw (2001) further stress that this situation is unfortunate and uncomfortable for both the superior and his or her subordinates. It leads to defensive and unsupportive behavior on the part of the subordinates.

The nature of the environment in which interpersonal group relationships occur also affects the quality of leadership. The environment is affected by the success and failures of the leader, which in turn are also affected partly by other external factors, such government policy (Cleland, 1998). One environmental factor is the hygienic factor. Supervision, working conditions, wages, policies, interpersonal relations, policies and job security are easy to come by during times of prosperity. However, during times of adversity, the hygienic factors may gradually reduce in volume, scope, and quality; benefits and salaries may be reduced. However, human relations and supervision may improve, certain efforts may yield better results than the others, and there may be shifts of attention as the case may be. At this point, reward and the self-development aspects of the motivation system should become prominent (Cleland, 1998). As explained by Donnelly (1999) adversity can enhance zeal. Some individuals prefer to be inefficient at every possible opportunity. Examples are the contrast between the zeal expressed by British workers during the 1930s and during the Second World War, or between American railroads workers before and after the changes made to Union and government regulations. In both cases, decisive leadership was demonstrated. However, in the former, the situation changed from desultory to brilliance, whereas the converse can be said of the later. Donnelly (1999) further explains that in the 1930s, the British were pacifist-minded; they chose political leadership, which promised security and sharing of wealth. However, during the critical challenge, they chose the preservation of their freedom above everything else. Therefore, a leader who can satisfy this need was chosen. As regards the American railroad, the employee morale was high in the years of construction. However, with the introduction of railroad unions and government regulations, employees took solace in others aside from their managers for the fulfillment of their needs. Whatever the environment, leaders emerge to make decisions and make positive effects. Strategic planning is very important in making decisions. According to Dubrin (2007) self-analysis of the company is needed to assess the previous performance and present position of the organization. Strategic planning is designed based on the realistic assessment of capacities (i.e., the strengths and weaknesses of the organization) that are of great managerial value (Dubrin, 2007). Therefore, this paper intends to identify on how behavioural competences can contribute to the effectiveness of leadership in construction companies in the Libyan Construction industry.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The random sample was drawn from managers from the public and private sectors in the Libyan construction companies. The behavioral competence consisted of two items: social/

vocational and intra-professional (Figure 1). These have 17 variables. From the 280 questionnaires sent out, a total of 255 responses were received within four months. Data from the remaining 255 usable returned questionnaires were checked, edited, coded and analyzed. This way, 255 Libyan managers were contacted to fill up the questionnaires. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which each of the 17 variables influenced the leadership performance of the construction companies in Libya using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important).

Behavioural competence
1. Social / vocational
2. Intraprofessional

Effective of Project Leader

*Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the relationships
between behavioural competence and the effective project leader.*

The survey questionnaire was administered to the respondents in their work settings during normal working hours, and included with each packet was a letter indicating the general nature of the current research and assuring all respondents that their individual responses would remain anonymous. The feedback was obtained in 2 weeks time which started 12 January 2010 and ended on 30 January 2010. After all the raw data obtained, the data were then used as input and analyzed with the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 15). The respondents characteristics involved in this study can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Presents the respondents' characteristics

Factor	Frequency
Designation in the company	
Director	38 (27.5%)
Manager	25 (18.1%)
Executive	39 (28.3%)
Non-executive	36 (26.1%)
Company legal status	
Sole proprietor	66 (47.8%)
Private limited	19 (13.8%)
Public limited	31 (22.5%)
Government link company	22 (15.9%)
Experiences	
1-5 years	66 (47.8%)
6-10 years	46 (33.3%)
11-15 years	16 (11.6%)
More than 20 years	10 (7.2%)
Quality or strategy management system	
ISO 9000	9 (6.5%)
TQM (total quality management)	10 (7.2%)
TPM (total project management)	22 (15.9%)
Conventional system	97 (70.3%)

Education	
Bachelor's	66 (47.8%)
Master's	22 (15.9%)
Doctor's	2 (1.4%)
Others	48 (34.8%)

4.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results presented in Table 2 show that some factors from social/vocational factors like committed (p-value=0.015), decisive (p-value=0.000), and punctuality (p-value=0.014) have statistical significance in relation to the designation of the company. The other listed factors do not show significance. Among the intraprofessional factors, only public relations (p-value=0.021) show significance. However, the rest of factors of intra-professional do not show any positive significance.

Table 2: Company designation versus behavioral competency factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
Self-confidence	0.451	0.717
Interpersonal	1.867	0.136
Calmness	0.736	0.532
Presentation skills	1.793	0.149
Analytical / investigative	0.884	0.450
Committed	3.580	0.015*
Logical	0.996	0.395
Comprehensive	0.486	0.692
Flexible	0.270	0.847
Proactive	1.495	0.217
Decisive	6.921	0.000**
Punctuality	3.624	0.014*
2. Intraprofessional		
Collegiality	1.843	0.140
Sensitivity to peers	1.595	0.191
Conformity to professional norms	0.050	0.985
Teamwork	2.638	0.050
Public relations	3.295	0.021*

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; *$P< 0.05$ (level of significance)

In Table 3, social/vocational factors such as interpersonal (p-value=0.020), committed (p-value=0.005), proactive (p-value=0.001), decisive (p-value=0.014), and punctuality (p-value=0.001) are significant to the legal status of the company. Among the intraprofessional factors, conformity to professional norms (p-value=0.046) and public relations (p-value=0.003) are positively significant to the legal status of the company.

Table 3: Legal status of the company versus behavioral competence factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
Self-confidence	0.264	0.851

Interpersonal	3.338	0.020*
Calmness	1.911	0.128
Presentation skills	1.661	0.176
Analytical / investigative	0.973	0.406
Committed	4.426	0.005*
Logical	1.340	0.262
Comprehensive	1.427	0.236
Flexible	2.623	0.051*
Proactive	5.389	0.001*
Decisive	3.616	0.014*
Punctuality	6.101	0.001*
2. Intraprofessional		
Collegiality	0.699	0.554
Sensitivity to peers	1.279	0.282
Conformity to professional norms	2.713	0.046*
Teamwork	1.594	0.191
Public relations	4.658	0.003*

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; * $P< 0.05$ (level of significance).

Furthermore, social/vocational factors like calmness (p-value=0.042), analytical/ investigative (p-value=0.018), flexible (p-value=0.010), as well as proactive (p-value=0.002), are significant to working experience. Only sensitivity to peers (p-value=0.007) among the intraprofessional factors is significant to working experience (Table 4).

Table 4: Working experience versus behavioral competence factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
Self-confidence	2.255	0.082
Interpersonal	1.433	0.234
Calmness	2.778	0.042*
Presentation skills	2.178	0.091
Analytical / investigative	3.407	0.018*
Committed	2.173	0.092
Logical	2.017	0.112
Comprehensive	1.655	0.177
Flexible	3.869	0.010*
Proactive	5.244	0.002*
Decisive	2.086	0.103
Punctuality	1.275	0.284
2. Intraprofessional		
Collegiality	0.071	0.976
Sensitivity to peers	4.111	0.007*
Conformity to professional norms	1.449	0.229
Teamwork	1.961	0.120
Public relations	0.364	0.779

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; * $P< 0.05$ (level of significance).

From the results presented in Table 5 on social/vocational factors, presentation skills (p-value=0.001), analytical/investigative (p-value=0.011), committed (p-value=0.000), logical (p-value=0.003), and decisive (p-value=0.005) are significant to the establishment of the company in the construction industry. Among the intraprofessional factors shown in Table (5), collegiality (p-value=0.011), teamwork (p-value=0.007), and public relations (p-value=0.006) are clearly shown to be significant.

Table 5: Company establishment versus behavioral competence factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
- Self-confidence	0.829	0.479
- Interpersonal	2.086	0.103
- Calmness	0.761	0.517
- Presentation skills	5.764	0.001*
- Analytical / investigative	3.783	0.011*
- Committed	7.063	0.000**
- Logical	4.759	0.003*
- Comprehensive	1.332	0.265
- Flexible	1.598	0.190
- Proactive	1.258	0.289
- Decisive	4.435	0.005*
- Punctuality	1.084	0.356
2. Intraprofessional		
- Collegiality	3.782	0.011*
- Sensitivity to peers	0.450	0.718
- Conformity to professional norms	2.547	0.056
- Teamwork	4.118	0.007*
- Public relations	4.239	0.006*

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; *$P< 0.05$ (level of significance).

Table 6 shows that among social/vocational factors, self-confidence (p-value=0.000), interpersonal (p-value=0.020), calmness (p-value=0.002), presentation skills (p-value=0.007), analytical/investigative (p-value=0.001), committed (p-value=0.025), logical (p-value=0.000), comprehensive (p-value=0.001), flexible (p-value=0.010), proactive (p-value=0.000), decisive (p-value=0.020), and punctuality (p-value=0.004) are significant to the quality of management system strategy. Table 6 shows that among the intraprofessional factors, collegiality (p-value=0.003), sensitivity to peers (p-value=0.000), conformity to professional norms (p-value=0.001), teamwork (p-value=0.010), and public relations (p-value=0.000) have significance to the management system strategy.

Table 6: Strategy management system versus behavioral competence factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
Self-confidence	8.985	0.000**
Interpersonal	3.351	0.020*
Calmness	4.933	0.002*
Presentation skills	4.122	0.007*
Analytical / investigative	5.973	0.001*
Committed	3.177	0.025*
Logical	7.379	0.000**

Comprehensive	5.462	0.001*
Flexible	3.890	0.010*
Proactive	8.555	0.000**
Decisive	3.352	0.020*
Punctuality	4.604	0.004*
2. Intraprofessional		
Collegiality	4.710	0.003*
Sensitivity to peers	10.062	0.000**
Conformity to professional norms	5.920	0.001*
Teamwork	3.867	0.010*
Public relations	8.082	0.000**

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; * $P< 0.05$ (level of significance).

The results presented in Table 7 clearly show that several social/vocational factors show statistical significance to educational background. These factors are calmness (p-value=0.002), presentation skills (p-value=0.002), flexible (p-value=0.002), proactive (p-value=0.001), and punctuality (p-value=0.007). However, self-confidence, interpersonal, analytical/investigative, committed, logical, comprehensive, and decisive do not show significance to educational background. Based on the analysis of intraprofessional factors, only two factors show positive statistical significance with educational background. These are sensitivity to peers (p-value=0.006) and conformity to professional norms (p-value=0.045).

Table 7: Educational background versus behavioral competence factors

Factor	F	*P*-value
Behavioural Competence		
1. Social / vocational		
Self-confidence	0.517	0.671
Interpersonal	0.799	0.496
Calmness	5.030	0.002*
Presentation skills	4.902	0.002*
Analytical / investigative	1.945	0.123
Committed	1.164	0.324
Logical	0.518	0.671
Comprehensive	1.742	0.159
Flexible	5.003	0.002*
Proactive	5.848	0.001*
Decisive	1.621	0.185
Punctuality	4.111	0.007*
2. Intraprofessional		
Collegiality	0.950	0.417
Sensitivity to peers	4.233	0.006*
Conformity to professional norms	2.718	0.045*
Teamwork	1.334	0.264
Public relations	1.448	0.229

*** $P<0.001$; ** $P<0.001$; * $P< 0.05$ (level of significance).

5.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDING

As mentioned in the Analysis section, there are two types of behavioral competences:

social/vocational and intraprofessional.

5.1 Social/vocational
The factors tested under social/vocational competency clearly showed that the factors are indeed important for the Libyan construction companies because these serve as a guide for a successful leadership. The factors develop social perceptiveness among the members of the company, specifically in interacting with its members. This is in agreement with the ideas of Copeman (1971) and Mahoney *et al*., (1965) that the skills tested reconcile differences in perspectives among the employees and establish mutually satisfying relationship among the members of the company. Owing to these, the pursuit of the organizational objectives will be more effective and efficient.

5.2 Intraprofessional
A key characteristic in leadership is the ability to consider the importance of intraprofessional competency. It involves the development of relationship among the members of the company, that is, how the workers of the company function in conformity with the professional norm mandated by the company itself. Team building is therefore necessary in this aspect to achieve one common objective. It conforms to one of the aspects presented by Black and Porter (2000), who stated that this engages relationship behaviors such as support and cooperation and displays trust and confidence among the members of the company.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study has considered behavioural competences as a prediction to test the leadership's effectiveness within the Libyan construction industry. These behavioral competences were consisted of two items, namely, social/vocational factors which included 12 items, and the other one is intra-professional factors which provided 5 items. From the analysis, however, behavioral competences for both social/vocational and intraprofessional factors are shown to be positively significant only with the strategy management system of the participating companies.

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