



Nexus between Ambidextrous Leadership and Xenophobia in Construction Project Success

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ABSTRACT

Leader opening and closing behaviors are assumed to foster high levels of employee exploration and exploitation behaviors, enhancing Project Success (PS) parameters by reducing the impact of Xenophobia (XP). Besides, previous studies relating to ambidextrous leadership (AL), and xenophobia, among CPEC projects in Pakistan and its implication for project success are inadequate. Hence, this study examines the mediating role of Xenophobia on the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and project success. The Study framework is established on ambidextrous theory. Data was collected from persons holding various key positions in the construction projects under CPEC – China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Total questionnaires of 570 were distributed, and 424 were returned. A convenient sampling technique was used. Hypotheses tests were performed via Smart PLS 3.0. Results show that the closing behavior of a leader positively affects the construction project's success. In contrast, the opening behavior of the leader fails to establish with construction project's success. Besides, Opening and closing leadership behavior have a negative relationship with Xenophobia. While Xenophobia has a negative effect on the construction project's success. Xenophobia mediated the relationship between Opening & closing leadership and a construction project's success. Findings provide essential insights to owner-managers, policy-makers, and researchers for further understanding this research.



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1. Introduction

Scientific research in project management gained momentum during the last decade (Zaman, Florez-Perez, Anjam, Khwaja, & Ul-Huda, 2022). However, the international project management industry reports shocking numbers of project failures (Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Standish Group, 2018). Project management firms bear an annual loss of US 99 million dollars against US 1 trillion investment in projects (Zaman, Nawaz, Anjam, Anwar, & Siddique, 2021). Nevertheless, more and more research studies have been directed toward investigating and introducing different items in the framework of project success (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016; Khan & Rasheed, 2015; Zaman, Jabbar, Nawaz, & Abbas, 2019; J. Zheng et al., 2021). An increasing number of research endeavors are witnessed to fill out research gaps in project management literature that ensure the discovery of better project management processes (Zaman et al., 2021).

The project management environment has become highly dynamic, challenging, and demanding, which demands resilience, flexibility, and focus on efficient project management practices to achieve the desired project goals (Bryde, Unterhitzberger, & Joby, 2018; Zaman et al., 2022). The project management researchers and experts not only find it difficult to classify the constructs of project management best practices but also face difficulty in anticipating other constructs (Zaman et al., 2022). This research study aspires to explore new insights for academics and project practitioners to revive project management practices.

Modern projects are exposed to unprecedented risks with varying predictability and influence (Zaman et al., 2021), exerting extra pressure on project managers to become proactive and early adopters by employing ambidextrous leadership. The transformation leadership exhibited by the CEO, Project leader, or project manager can drive the organization towards a new course of project success through innovation in project and portfolio management (Iqbal, Zaman, Siddiqui, & Imran, 2019; Kopmann, Kock, Killen, & Gemünden, 2017). A deep study of existing scientific literature on project success, the present study has developed a comprehensive and novel framework for project success. Therefore, this research study has dual implications for project manager practitioners. First, the project management organizations can benefit from the extraordinary benefits of ambidextrous leadership and project success (Hassi, 2019; Zaman et al., 2022).

The construction industry has become highly dynamic with technological development and increasing client expectations. Other factors responsible for the volatility of the construction sector are an increase in budget, time constraints, process development, and advanced work methods (Musarat, Alaloul, & Liew, 2021). The inception of any construction project requires a considerable amount of capital and a large workforce. Therefore, the construction project managers need to use effective work and leadership styles to ensure the project's overall success (Odusami, Iyagba, & Omirin, 2003; Zaman, 2020).

Completing mega construction projects (MCP) costs millions and billions for many countries worldwide. It has remained a high priority because completing such mega construction projects (MCP) greatly impacts the country's social, economic, and environmental progress (Weng et al., 2021). The construction industry makes a large percentage of the world's GDP, which exceeds 8 percent of the GDP of developing countries. Around the Globe, mega construction projects (MCPs) have created impetus in the construction sector. The global construction industry's output will reach \$12.9 trillion by 2022 (Deloitte, 2019).

A comprehensive study on risk identification and management in construction projects was conducted by (Santomauro et al., 2021), wherein 63 risk factors were identified through experts' opinion, especially high-risk factors that could affect the performance of the project and its overall success. The high-risk factors affecting the overall success of mega construction projects are related to equipment, material quality, machinery, implementation, and design errors. Above all, interaction and coordination among project team members are the lifeblood of project success (Banerjee Chattapadhyay, Putta, & Rao P, 2021). However, in the context of international personnel employed in a mega construction project, coordination suffers due to Xenophobia.

According to the ambidexterity leadership theory, such a leadership style encourages employee idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. The leaders who display both the dimensions of ambidexterity, i.e., opening/ transformational and closing/ transactional leadership behaviors called fostering exploration and fostering exploitation, respectively, are more successful in achieving the desired outcome of the projects. The opening leader behavior affects idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization, whereas the closing leader behavior reinforces the relationship between idea generation and realization (Mascareño, Rietzschel, & Wisse, 2021).

Project success is a primary concern in mega construction projects (MCPs), where considerable capital is involved. The project client expects high cost, time, and quality performance, and the project manager is critical in achieving these highly valued objectives

for the team and organization. Project success in the construction industry depends on the project manager who displays the abovementioned leadership styles to lead in the right direction (Ali & Chileshe, 2009).

The discipline of project management has grown internationally over time as more and more projects are being initiated and completed using the principles of project management. According to (R. Turner, Ledwith, & Kelly, 2012), almost thirty percent of the world economy relies on projects. Therefore, the researchers are interested in finding the critical factors of project success (Oluwafemi, Mitchelmore, & Nikolopoulos, 2020). Likewise, this research study aims to find antecedents of project success (DV) in the construction industry of Pakistan.

Xenophobia has been a new challenge for project managers, leaders, and academic researchers in mega construction projects (MCPs). Multicultural and multinational personnel working together may lead the project to a state of dilemma and irreparable loss. International construction firms face the problem of xenophobia in executing globalized construction projects (Zaman et al., 2019). There are geopolitical and economic factors responsible for increasing apprehension about other nationals. Due to this issue, we have witnessed acute failures and delays in many country-level mega-construction projects.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a collection of mega projects connecting Xinjiang with Gwadar port, is intended to upgrade the infrastructure and economy of Pakistan. CPEC's Long-Term Plan (2017-2030) was publicized in December 2017, wherein the project was defined as "a growth axis and a development belt," with "the comprehensive transportation corridor and industrial cooperation between Pakistan and China as the main axis" and "concrete economic and trade cooperation" as "the engine". This program has been targeted for xenophobic attacks due to its strategic and geopolitical importance (Surahio, Gu, Mahesar, & Soomro, 2022).

Furthermore, CPEC is a very complex, large-scale project which involves a considerable amount of investments. Due to its size and impact, this project can influence the economy and lives of many people. Besides, this project needs dozens of years to complete (Ghafoor, Hussain, & Saeed, 2020). However, considering the political, social, contractual, financial, and environmental difficulties the project managers face in constructing such projects. The completion of a project in a stipulated timeline can become a challenge (Jaafari, 1984; Wang, Han, De Vries, & Zuo, 2016). Therefore, an effective leadership style is a critical factor for the success of a mega construction project (MCP) (Chan, Scott, & Chan, 2004). Ambidexterity leadership can maintain an appropriate composite of exploitative and explorative activities essential for projects (Gerlach, Hundeling, & Rosing, 2020; Oluwafemi et al., 2020).

However, uneven benefits and localized opinions that CPEC projects damage the locals' economic, social, and political interests and can cause an uprising against the Chinese within Pakistan (Afzaal, 2020). We already have several attacks on Chinese personnel employed in CPEC Projects. As per definition, these outcomes stem from Xenophobia. The feasibility of CPEC projects depends on stakeholder ownership because uneven wealth accumulation and prioritizing foreigners over locals would exacerbate social and political divides, which would result in xenophobia and conflict. It was witnessed due to insurgencies in the federating units of Balochistan and Sindh against the federation of Pakistan and Chinese personnel.

Next, to address the problem of xenophobia in meeting project success, there is a need to understand the theoretical gap by taking both the dimensions of ambidextrous leadership, i.e., transformational/ opening leadership behavior (OLB) and transactional/closing leadership behavior (CLB). Moreover, test it as a predecessor of project success (PS) (Aga et al., 2016). Since there is a theoretical base of mega construction projects (MCP) have multinational supply chains and diverse workforces (Gap, 2017). Therefore the rise of xenophobia is a recent issue observed in various studies of such workforce settings (Lin, Yang, Wu, Wang, & Zhu, 2011). Likewise, mega construction projects (MCP) under CPEC have global supply chains and a multicultural workforce (Narayanan & Huemann, 2021). Therefore, Xenophobia has been taken in this research study as a mediator between ambidextrous leadership (opening leadership

behavior (OLB) and closing leadership behavior (CLB) and mega construction project (MCP) success.

An ambidextrous leader uses the transformational leadership style when a person confronts a dynamic environment, and conversely, he/she uses the transactional leadership style in a stable environment (Aubry, 2019; N. Turner, Maylor, & Swart, 2013). So, according to the situation, it is a display of entirely malicious behaviors by the ambidextrous leader. This ambidexterity of the leader in transactional leadership displays mutual benefits and a system of rewards/ punishments (Tung, 2016). The transformational leadership style is more related to the motivation an ambidextrous leader gives his subordinates to achieve their and his organization's goals (R. Müller & J. R. Turner, 2010; Tung, 2016). Fourthly, this study has absorbed xenophobia as a mediator in this model because few research studies have used the construction of xenophobia in the context of mega construction projects. Instead, xenophobia was used for immigrants related research studies.

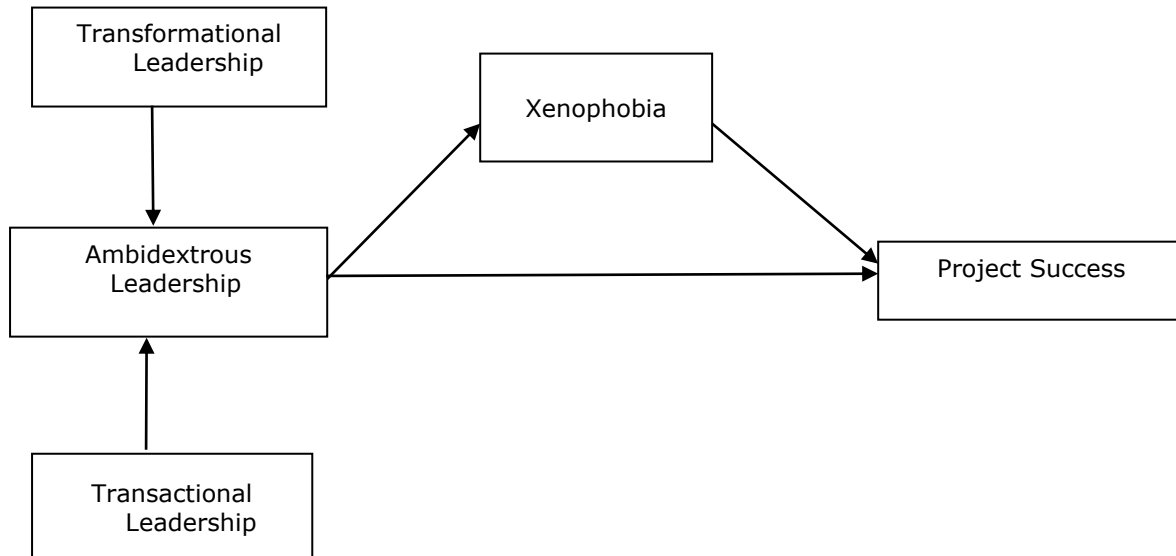


Figure 1: Research Framework

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Transformational Leadership Behaviours and Project Success

The transformational leadership style helps a leader to adapt to uncertain work environments simultaneously quite crucial for success (Zaman et al., 2019). Transformational leaders are keen to respond to the dynamic market swiftly. For this purpose, they motivate their team members and encourage the exploration of new knowledge and opportunities to meet and exceed the desired results (Jansen, Tempelaar, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2009).

Furthermore, transformational leaders also motivate employees and subordinates for innovative ways of doing various tasks and avoid old-fashioned practices of an organization and its current state of affairs. So, ambidextrous leaders pursue collective goals instead of individual ones (Tepper et al., 2018). Although there is an increasing trend of research studies on transformational leadership, we can observe a visible gap in assessing the impact of transformational leadership behavior on successful performance or execution in mega projects (Chen & Yang, 2019).

However, there is evidence from the literature that transformational leadership helps in organizational change, conflict resolution, and adaptability to environmental dynamics. Hence, these aspects help improve organizational performance (Weller, Süß, Evanschitzky, & von Wangenheim, 2020; Zaman et al., 2019). Likewise, the project performance and success depend on the leadership style or behavior of the project manager, which should be preemptive instead of responsive (Maqbool, Sudong, Manzoor, & Rashid, 2017). The particular behavior of the project manager is responsible for better project success (Zwikael & Unger-Aviram, 2010). However, (R. Müller & R. Turner, 2010) have described

transformational leadership style as successful project leader behavior, particularly for mega and complex projects that need more dexterity.

The project organizations require project managers' authorization of transformational leadership behavior to complete more successful projects (Maqbool et al., 2017). Glaring research studies have proven a positive relationship between transformational leadership and project success (Aga et al., 2016; Maqbool et al., 2017). However, project managers' transformational leadership behavior in mega construction projects with multi-national human resources still needs to be explored (Zaman et al., 2019; Zhang, Cao, & Wang, 2018). Based on the above literature, the following hypotheses have been formulated;

H1a: Opening/ Transformational leadership positively affects construction projects' success.

2.2. Transactional Leadership Behaviors and Project Success

The literature on transactional leadership behavior and project success are not as much as the transformational leadership behavior in project settings due to its evolving trend and new phenomenon. However, existing literature confirms that transactional leadership behavior is also helpful in some situations for project success. Transactional leadership was first coined in 1978 (Burns, Looney, Casey, & O'Donnell, 1978). Transactional leadership depends upon a leader's give-and-take relationship and followers (Longshore, 1987).

In a project environment, a project leader's co-existence of transformational and transactional leadership does not confirm whether it supports project success (J. Zheng et al., 2021). Besides, the role of these formative dimensions of ambidextrous leadership in the project performance of construction projects needs examination (J. Zheng et al., 2021). In other words, it is yet an under-study phenomenon whether the directive or empowering leadership behavior is more successful in mega construction projects (MCP). The existing research has not provided sufficient evidence concerning which leadership styles can better enhance performance or work outcomes. Above discussion on transactional leadership style in view, we articulate that;

H1b: Closing/ Transactional leadership positively affects construction projects' success.

2.3. Xenophobia, Project Success, and dimensions of ambidextrous leadership

The literature reveals that multinational construction firms having an international operation in various countries especially working on mega construction projects, generate trillions of dollars in revenue wherein a significant percentage of their revenue is generated outside their countries of origin. However, these international projects also produce higher risks and challenges, and xenophobia is the biggest of them all (Deloitte, 2019; Lei, Mbamalu, & Qin, 2017; Temple et al., 2003).

It is evident in the Brexit referendum that xenophobia was a significant reason for the failure of the economy of the United Kingdom, which exerted high cost and labor shortage pressure on mega construction projects. It also increased the prices of imports (Gabbatiss, 2017). Similarly, there are reported instances across the globe wherein locals have protested against the employment of foreigners having resentments of localized unemployment in the host country (Gall, 2012; Ince, Featherstone, Cumbers, MacKinnon, & Strauss, 2015).

The word xenophobia originates at the end of the nineteenth century. The term xenophobia was introduced in early 1880 when the same was quoted for the first time. Otherwise, intelligent xenomelia has been conclusively better than xenophobia, which is inevitable and always foolish. This sentence is taken from an article published in the Daily Times 12th of April, 1880 (London, England; Merriam Webster Inc., 2020). According to the first definition, xenophobia is the hatred or the fear of foreigners or strangers. This word was first born because of the unrestrained political concerns of the Renaissance (Sheridan, 2006; Zaman et al., 2021). However, the root of xenophobia is Greek as "Xenos," which

means a guest or a stranger. Similarly, the word phobia has emerged from another Greek word, "Phobos" (which means fear or flight) (Merriam Webster Inc., 2020).

These xenophobic feelings prevail in mega construction firms with international human resources, which are potential fail points affecting overall project success (Manana, Van Waveren, & Chan, 2012). Multinational firms of Chinese origin consistently gain much of the total proportion of the construction industry globally. At the same time, they are facing xenophobia due to the same economic factors. The Chinese construction firm follows the policy of no outsourcing and utilizing human resources, raw materials, and other resources of china only which motivates locals against Chinese workers/employees. It is the leading cause of xenophobia against Chinese workers in a setting of mega construction international projects (Corkin, 2012).

H2a: Opening/ Transformational leadership has a negative relationship with xenophobia.

H2b: Closing/ Transactional leadership has a positive relationship with xenophobia.

Besides, hatred, fear, or xenophobia can lead to adverse outcomes in a company or organization (Aydin, Krueger, Frey, Kastenmüller, & Fischer, 2014; Xiaopeng & Pheng, 2013; Zaman et al., 2021). Similarly, the construction industry is also sensitive to xenophobia, especially mega construction projects (MCP). It can lead to adverse outcomes because various societal, political, financial, and environmental risks are already associated with this industry (Tchaptchet & Njamen, 2018). The xenophobia has emerged as one of the significant challenges in successfully implementing and completing the construction projects (Zaman, 2020). In a research study by (Kadry, Osman, & Georgy, 2017), and another research study by (Xiaopeng & Pheng, 2013), it was found that the presence of xenophobia puts the construction project in a challenging situation and it may also lead to difficulties in the successful completion of the construction projects.

In mega construction projects (MCPs) where multicultural and multinational human resource is employed, the chances of xenophobic incidents are increased. This situation in mega construction projects becomes challenging for project managers/project leaders. (Zaman et al., 2021). In the light of the above discussion, we also assume that:

H3: Xenophobia significantly adversely affects the construction project's success.

Accordingly, many employees have different national and ethnic backgrounds in construction projects (Frank & Fruchter, 2014; Loosemore & Chau, 2002). For instance, to complete a single construction project, employees from countries like Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries come together and work in a diverse environment (Loosemore & Chau, 2002). Therefore, a high level of xenophobia and xenophobic incidents have been observed in the construction sector (Kadry et al., 2017; Zaman, 2020). Therefore, managing such a diverse workforce requires strong management and leadership so that the employees can work in a comfortable and safe working environment (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Choi, Price, & Vinokur, 2003; DiTomaso & Hooijberg, 1996).

The transformational leadership style brings continuous improvement in the organization that enhances motivation and morality among employees, leading to the collective interests of the subordinates (Aga et al., 2016; Zaman, 2020). Transformational leaders focus the long-term projects and inspire their subordinates to fulfill the company's objectives and achieve their objectives/needs (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). On the other hand, transactional leaders focus on short-term goals and use rewards to motivate their followers to achieve their targets and the company's goals (Zaman, 2020). Ambidextrous leadership integrates transformational and transactional leadership, which enunciates that a leader can maintain a good balance between long-term and short-term activities (Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011).

Moreover, ambidextrous leaders are more flexible in their responses to internal problems and external challenges (Zacher, Robinson, & Rosing, 2016). Such a leader can also maintain a healthy culture in the workplace that is free from issues like prejudice and xenophobia. According to the ambidexterity theory of leadership, this is a complex approach

appropriate for dealing with a complex workforce in the business setting (Rosing et al., 2011; Zaman, 2020; Zaman et al., 2021). Ambidextrous leadership can also help in eradicating internalized racism and xenophobia. The ambidextrous leadership in a company is based on the collective goals of different stakeholders to achieve better project success outcomes (Rosing et al., 2011; Zaman, 2020; Zaman et al., 2021). Hence, we postulate that;

H4a: Xenophobia mediates the relationship between Opening/ Transformational leadership and a construction project's success.

H4b: Xenophobia mediates the relationship between Closing/ Transactional leadership and a construction project's success.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

This study used a quantitative research design. The survey method issued for the analysis of the above-stated relationships between the variables of ambidextrous leadership (with its formative variables dimensions of transformational leadership and transactional leadership), xenophobia, and construction project success. The survey was conducted through a cross-sectional analysis and data is acquired from a sample population at one time. To test the hypotheses mentioned above, we used a sample of persons holding various key positions in the construction projects under CPEC – China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The sample comprised project management professionals with vast experience and direct knowledge of working in construction projects under CPEC to answer the desired questions appropriately. Total 570 questionnaires were distributed and 424 valid responses were received using convenient sampling technique, with a response rate of 74%. Besides, the study required applying the SEM- Structural Equation Modeling technique, wherein the recommended sample size for performing the analysis is a minimum of 100 to 200 respondents (Chumney, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2015).

3.1. Measures

The Ambidexterity Leadership and its formative dimensions of opening and closing leadership behaviors are measured through the scale/ questionnaire items adapted from (Luu, 2017). This questionnaire contains 14 questions, seven questions for each dimension, with answers on a five-point Likert scale. Moreover, for Xenophobia construct.

We have adapted questionnaire items from (De Weers et al., 2011) with 9 items and measured on five-point Likert scale. Lastly to measure, Project success variable, we adapted questionnaire items from (Wu, Liu, Zhao, & Zuo, 2017) with 11 item scale measured on five-point Likert scale.

3.2. Data Analysis

In the present study, item reliability was examined through Composite reliability (CR). CR values vary from 0 to 1; the threshold value should not be less than 0.70. Values ranging between 0.70 and 0.90 are termed 'satisfactory to good.' Values higher than 0.95 are considered problematic and suggest the likelihood of uneven response patterns (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). While assessing the model, the measurement model was found suitable to examine model reliability and validity. Talking about outer (factor) loadings, as (Vinzi, Trinchera, & Amato, 2010) proposed, the values must be more than 0.50. Any item loading more petite than the specified threshold should be deleted to improve the overall data quality.

The researcher has examined the outer loadings and cross-loadings of all included items to find any problem before establishing the convergent validity. Its serves as a requirement for the measurement model. (Hair et al., 2019) suggest convergent validity is established when the outer loadings of all items are more significant than 0.708, and the loadings on a construct are higher than all its loadings with other constructs.

Average variance extracted(AVE) equals to or exceeds 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 1 shows that all latent variables included in the study have AVE and CR in the acceptable

range, more than 0.50 and 0.70, respectively. Thus, internal consistency reliability is established.

Table 1
Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted of Latent Variables

	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Ambidextrous-Closing Leadership Behavior (CLB)	CLB1	0.682	0.867	0.898	0.558
	CLB2	0.793			
	CLB3	0.769			
	CLB4	0.808			
	CLB5	0.763			
	CLB6	0.768			
	CLB7	0.630			
Ambidextrous-Opening Leadership Behavior (OLB)	OLB1	0.685	0.849	0.887	0.532
	OLB2	0.775			
	OLB3	0.829			
	OLB4	0.754			
	OLB5	0.808			
	OLB6	0.616			
	OLB7	0.603			
Project Success (PS)	PS1	0.709	0.913	0.927	0.538
	PS2	0.768			
	PS3	0.712			
	PS4	0.655			
	PS5	0.629			
	PS6	0.803			
	PS7	0.808			
	PS8	0.792			
	PS9	0.763			
	PS10	0.630			
	PS11	0.767			
Xenophobia (XP)	XP1	0.810	0.926	0.938	0.629
	XP2	0.785			
	XP3	0.742			
	XP4	0.783			
	XP5	0.785			
	XP6	0.811			
	XP7	0.831			
	XP8	0.723			
	XP9	0.858			

3.3. Hypotheses Testing (structural Model Assessment)

This section of the study explains the inner (structural) model assessment, based on (Hair et al., 2019). suggestions. Structural model assessment deals with relationship dependence in the hypothesized model of the study. In the current study context, if the t-value is more than 1.64, it is termed as significant (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014). This value is further used to make decisions regarding the proposed hypothesis. The foremost objective of this research is to emphasize model assessment with the testing of direct relationships and test the hypothesized relationships within the structural model.

Additionally, (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015) have illustrated the path p-value, co-efficient value, t-value, and the standard errors. Based on these thresholds, the decision regarding each hypothesis has been made. The t-values for the current study have been generated through bootstrapping with 5000 sampling iterations for 424 observations.

Based on the data analysis of 424 observations, the structural model assessment revealed that out of seven direct hypotheses, six hypotheses had been found significant. However, only one hypothesis of opening leadership effect on project success was insignificant. The results for the direct hypothesis are revealed in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effects)

Direct Hypotheses	Beta	T-Values	P-Values	Decision
Ambidextrous Leadership -> Project Success	0.216	3.229	0.001	Supported
Opening Leadership Behavior -> Project Success	0.060	1.506	0.066	Not Supported
Closing Leadership Behavior -> Project Success	0.098	1.954	0.025	Supported
Ambidextrous Leadership -> Xenophobia	-0.685	16.539	0.000	Supported
Opening Leadership Behavior -> Xenophobia	-0.457	6.909	0.000	Supported
Closing Leadership Behavior -> Xenophobia	-0.288	3.587	0.000	Supported
Xenophobia -> Project Success	-0.088	1.694	0.045	Supported

3.4. Mediation Analysis

In the current study, bootstrapping (re-sampling mediation technique) was used by researchers to test the indirect effects. Likewise, several studies have identified bootstrapping as a non-parametric resampling process that has gained researchers' acknowledgment as it is considered an effective method for conducting mediation analysis (Hayes, 2009). Bootstrapping has been used with a resampling of 5000 iterations, and the model depicted the t-values.

Table 3
Results of Hypothesis Testing (Indirect Effects)

Mediation Hypotheses	Beta Value	S.D	T value	P Values	Decision
Opening Leadership Behavior-> Xenophobia -> Project Success	0.077	0.031	2.453	0.007	Mediation
Closing Leadership Behavior-> Xenophobia -> Project Success	0.048	0.024	1.978	0.024	Mediation

4. Discussion

This research study investigated the relationship between Ambidextrous (formative dimensions) leadership and the construction project's success regarding the first research question. We found a significant positive relationship between Ambidextrous (formative dimensions) leadership and the construction project's success in supporting our first hypothesis. It shows the significance of ambidextrous leadership in achieving the success of construction projects. It means that when a project leader behaves ambidextrously according to the project setting, the projects' chances of success are enhanced. The results are coherent with the existing literature on construction project success (Mascareño et al., 2021; Probst, Raisch, & Tushman, 2011) (Mascareño et al., 2021). When an ambidextrous leader can successfully create a balance between supportive and controlling activities, a person can lead the firm towards high performance (Alghamdi, 2018).

Afterward, we investigated the relationship between Opening/ Transformational leadership and the construction project's success as our hypothesis H1a. Our results revealed that this relationship is not supported (p -value > 0.05). We had already discussed the evidence found from the literature that in a project environment, the co-existence of transformational and transactional leadership in a project leader does not confirm whether it supports project success (S. Zheng et al., 2020). The opening leader behavior affects idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization, whereas the closing leader behavior reinforces the relationship between idea generation and realization (Mascareño et al., 2021).

The study results also show a positive relationship between Closing/ Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on a construction project's success. These findings are coherent with the past research studies literature. For the project success variable of mega construction projects (MCPs), a critical variable addressed by this study is ambidextrous leadership behavior with is formative dimensions of opening leadership behavior and closing leadership behavior called transformational and transactional leadership behaviors, respectively. Leadership considers an essential part of project

management, as it can directly affect a project's outcomes (Berraies & El Abidine, 2019; Luo et al., 2018). At the same time, closing or transactional leadership is related to project managers' controlling function. Our evidence is in line with the past studies and their findings. Zaman et al. (2021) proved the exact dimension of ambidextrous leadership for mega-construction project success.

Furthermore, our study's findings reveal an adverse effect of ambidextrous leadership on xenophobia in mega construction projects under CPEC in Pakistan. When the project leader employs ambidextrous leadership according to the situation, the negative emotions of xenophobia are reduced. These findings are also coherent with the past literature. Since Xenophobia is described as the perceived fear of conflict between an out-group and an in-group. It can be manifested in suspicion by an individual of the activities of another person (Sheridan, 2006; Yakushko, 2010). Therefore, through various definitions of the word xenophobia, and the literature, it can be concluded that xenophobia is the hatred or fear towards someone believed to be strange or foreign. It may develop a desire to remove the presence of the foreigner mentioned above (Aydin et al., 2014; Kadry et al., 2017; Tchaptchet & Njamen, 2018; Zaman et al., 2021). The literature has given explanations such desire that it is due to the fear of losing racial, ethnic, or national identity (Aydin et al., 2014).

In continuation of the abovementioned findings, we also found that the opening or transformational leadership behavior significantly negatively impacts xenophobia. From these results, we can deduce that the opening/ transformational leadership behavior effectively reduces the negative emotions of xenophobia among mega construction project teams with diverse and multinational human resources. These findings are similar to the existing research studies and their conclusions on the same constructs. Since opening leader behavior or transformational leadership behavior affects idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization (Mascareño et al., 2021), thus the xenophobic sentiments are somewhat neutralized. In the context of mega construction projects, the contemporary literature has significant evidence available wherein the leadership behaviors of project managers help reduce xenophobia.

Similarly, Closing / Transactional Leadership Behavior was also assumed to impact xenophobia negatively, and our study results prove the same. We deduce that the closing leadership behavior of project leaders is also helpful in reducing the xenophobia among the construction project personnel. Previously, contemporary research studies considered opening / transformational leadership behavior in the presence of xenophobia to bring ultimate construction project success, while the closing or transactional leadership behavior dimension was missing (Zaman, 2020; Zaman et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2021). Our current research study findings prove that ambidextrous leadership dimensions help reduce the xenophobic sentiments among the project management personnel of mega construction projects. Therefore, the construction project managers should also exhibit closing or transactional leadership behavior towards their subordinates to reduce their feelings of xenophobia.

The hypothesis that xenophobia has a significant adverse effect on the construction project's success has been proven. It is consistent with the existing research studies on xenophobia and construction project management. Xenophobia is one of the significant risks associated with international mega-construction projects. Xenophobia is defined an attitudinal and actual partiality to the foreigners. Reynolds, Falger, and Vine (1987) have described it as an emotional state of enmity or apprehension for foreigners. The China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) has recent evidence of xenophobia among Chinese and Pakistani personnel. These occurrences are being felt like a potential threat to the success of CPEC. It has geopolitical and economic importance and challenges for both countries (Zaman et al., 2021).

As per the hypotheses of this study, the result also depicted that mediating effect of xenophobia pm the relationship between ambidextrous leadership (with its formative dimensions of opening / transformational leadership and closing / transactional leadership behaviors) and mega construction project success. Although xenophobia is scarcely used in literature, our findings about its mediating role in project management literature are

consistent with the previous research studies. The indirect effect of ambidextrous leadership (integrated from transactional/ closing leadership behavior and transformational/opening leadership behavior) on the construction of Project Success with mediating role of xenophobia has not been studied in the past literature.

4.1. Implications

4.1.1.Theoretical Implications

This research study has theoretical significance due to the mediation effects of xenophobia on ambidextrous leadership dimensions and their impact on project success. This research supports Zaman (2020); (Zaman et al., 2021), the only contemporary research studies to use xenophobia in construction project environments. Previously the context of xenophobia was used for the immigrant-related study. The significant theoretical implication of the study is that we have used formative dimensions of ambidextrous leadership to measure project success with mediation effects of xenophobia.

This research study validated ambidexterity theory and its implications in the mega construction projects in our context. It also gave interesting findings to extend existing knowledge on ambidexterity theory that in the context of South Asian countries, the transactional leadership behavior dimension of ambidextrous leadership is more valid than that of transformational leadership behavior. Xenophobia is an essential implication of this research study, which adds to the existing literature in the context of mega construction projects rather than immigrants only.

4.1.2.Managerial Implications

The research study findings also have significant implications for project management professionals and leaders working on mega construction projects in South Asian countries or Pakistan. A project manager can get insight from our findings that he or she must exhibit transactional or closing leadership behavior in the project environment to achieve construction project success and to reduce xenophobic sentiment among international personnel; the usability/skills enhancing training and performance-based rewards and incentives to reduce xenophobia and bring project success for mega construction projects.

4.2. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

During the hypothesis building, we aspired that the combined effect of ambidextrous leadership with both the dimensions of opening / transformational leadership and closing / transactional leadership will help achieve project success. Our aspirations of opening leadership behavior were related to employee empowerment or the opportunity to participate in the project organizations' decision-making process to reduce xenophobic sentiments and bring project success. Contrarily, in the context of Pakistan, CPEC, and mega construction projects opening leadership behavior and opportunity enhancement practices could not prove effective. However, testing the same model in the context of developed countries with better economic statistics and indices of employment, wages, per capital income, and democracy is recommended.

5. Conclusion

This research study concludes that xenophobia can undermine the progress of any mega construction project, especially in the context of international human resources. However, with the help of closing leadership behavior or transactional leadership behavior and extensive training along with performance-based rewards/ incentives, these negative sentiments against foreigners can be reduced, and project success can be achieved in the given context. The previous research studies have focused on xenophobia in the context of immigrants, while this is quite applicable in project environments where multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational human resources are deputed together. Moreover, the existing literature has considered transformational or opening leadership behavior only, while this study used both dimensions of ambidextrous leadership to measure their impact on project success.

The mediating relation of xenophobia between ambidextrous leadership with its formative dimensions and the success of mega construction projects is a novel study that has significance for both the construction industry and academia. The study has practical implications for international human resource projects with the novel construct of xenophobia. The study provides guidelines to reduce negative sentiments among national personnel and bring overall project success to the construction industry.

Authors Contribution

Muhammad Naeem Sadiq: Introduction, Research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and conclusion.

Muhammad Shahid Nawaz: Supervision, Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Final proofreading.

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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