

Work Supervisors' Leadership Styles and Labourers Performance of Northern Province, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Leadership style is one of the strategies to influence the performance of the employees of the organization. Main Objective of this research is to identify the impact of work supervisors' leadership styles on Road Maintenance labourers' performance in the Road development Authority, Northern Province. However, a part of the aims is to introduce the best leadership approach to increase the performance of RDA Road Maintenance Labourers working in the field. The research used mixed method approach with descriptive and inferential method to determine the effect of leadership styles on employee performance. The full range leadership styles of transformational, transactional, laissez faire and autocratic (independent variables) were considered with labourers performance (dependent variable). The sample population of the study is comprised of the 200 Road Maintenance labourers of the Northern province RDA. Simple random sampling techniques were used in this research. Two part of questionnaires were used to collect data on profile of sample and variables. SPSS 25 software was used to calculate inferential analysis of correlation and regression to test the hypothesis. The results from both analyses show that Transactional and Transformational leadership styles significantly impact on Road Maintenance labourers performance at the level of 0.05 ($P=0.044$) and 0.01 ($P=0.006$) respectively effect on employee performance. Overall leadership styles are impact on labourers performance at the level of 0.01 level (0.008). From the results, transformational and transactional leadership have greater effects on labourers' performance. It is recommended therefore that Transformational and transactional leaderships of work supervisors are the most effective leadership styles which are recommended for the RDA management to follow this HR practice by their work supervisors in order to increase the performance of RDA labourers.

Keywords: Leadership style; Transformational leadership; Transactional leadership; Authoritative leadership; Laissez fare leadership; Labourers performance.

1. Introduction

Leadership is simply "The art of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of goals" (Igbaekemen, 2014). Effective leadership enhances the productivity of employees in all the sectors of the economy in a country. Leadership plays a crucial role in creating an enthusiastic atmosphere and culture in an organization (Alghazo and Al-Anazi, 2016). The importance of leadership style is not unknown and it is shown by a significant number of studies that have been conducted on leadership style in developed and developing countries (Babatunde and Emem, 2015; Iqbal *et al.*, 2015; Mohammed *et al.*, 2014; Paracha *et al.*, 2012; Zumitzavan and Udchachone, 2014). Leadership is very important to the survival and effectiveness of organization's performance. As organisations grow and expectations about their performances increase, demand for good leadership tends to multiply. From every indication, there seems to be a strong link between leadership style and performance of employees in an organization (Eze, 2011).

The performance of Human resources is a major contributor for the achievement of Road development authority (RDA) goals and objectives. Out of the total human resources of the RDA, percentage of minor employees are 60%. Out of them, Road maintenance labourers are 92%. when considering all RDA employees, it is around 55%. The most of the labourers are unskilled labourers. They are engaged in maintenance and construction of roads, culverts and bridges. These labourers output depends on several factors such as skill, knowledge, experience, motivation, working conditions, remuneration, leadership styles, the work supervisors actions and characteristics such as guidance, engagement in the field, positive attitude, providing support, evaluate, good communication, good characters and behaviours, etc. From the empirical research findings regarding the employees performance, researchers identified that leadership style of the work supervisor is also one of the reason to determine the employees performance (Rizwan *et al.*, 2016). In the RDA these labourers performance/output are varied from team to team and individual to individual. Although there are several factors determine the performance of labourers, the leadership roles played by the work supervisors seems to be given more impacts on the labourers performance. Although RDA is expected 100% performance from their labourers and when comparing the performance of the

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labourers in different labour groups in the Northern Province, the performance of these Road maintenance labourers are varied from 60% to 80% under different leadership situations (RDA progress reports, 2016 and 2017). Due to lack of performance and capability of labourers and the lack of leadership capability of work supervisors, the management of the RDA has to do more road maintenance and construction works by outsourcing labourers and engaging private contractors.

Total expenditure incurred under Road maintenance trust fund (RMTF) work programme for the year 2015, 2016 and 2017 is around, 152 million, 200 million and 300 million respectively. 1/3 of worth of work has been done by using RDA labourers and 2/3 of worth of work has been done by out sourcing labourers and awarding the works to private contractors. When awarding works to private contractors, 20% profit has been paid in addition to the rate approved for the lowest rate of each item of works in the approved estimate. If these works have been attended by our labourers, the total expenditure would have been reduced by 40% inclusive of 20% of profit added to them. This unnecessary expenditure would have been avoided and the amount of 60 million, 80 million, 120 million respectively for the year 2015, 2016 and 2017 would have been saved and used by the RDA for some other useful activities.

The researcher identified that leadership styles of work supervisors is one of the major reasons for their unsatisfied performance and it affects the productivity of the organisation for the past several years. From this analysis researcher want to identify the answer for this question of how much impact of work supervisors leadership styles on labourers performance in the Road Development Authority?

This study is intended to investigate how different types of leadership styles adopted by the Work Supervisors give an impact on Labourers' performance and identify which leadership styles more suitable to increase the productivity of the RDA in the Northern Province.

The main objective of the study is to identify the impact of work supervisors' leadership styles on Road maintenance labourers' performance in the RDA.

2. Material and Methods

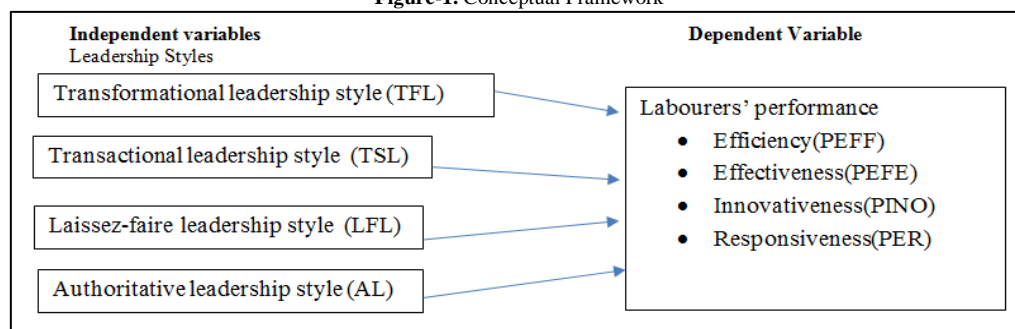
Employee engagement is the key factor which involved in the study and the identification of its effect on work outcome is the main purpose of this study.

Table-1. Key studies on leadership in the study context

No	Student study	Title	Dimension/ Variable
1	Nasrah (2012)	The relationship between leadership style and employee performance: A case of federal public sector in Sabah	Leadership style employee performance, federal public sector in Sabah.
2	Muthuveloo <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Adaptability in Call Center: A Perspective of Telecommunication Industry in Malaysia	Leadership styles, employee adaptability, telecommunication industry
3	Long <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Leadership Styles and Employees' Turnover Intention: Exploratory Study of Academic Staff in a Malaysian College	Leadership style Employees' turnover Transformation, Transactional Organization
4	Arham (2014)	Leadership and Performance: The Case of Malaysian SMEs In the Services Sector	Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Organizational performance, Services SMEs, Malaysia.
5	Nasir <i>et al.</i> (2014)	The Relationship of Leadership Styles and organizational performance among IPTA Academic Leaders in Klang Valley Area, Malaysia	Leadership styles, organizational performance, IPTA, Academic leaders

As discussed in literature review, the researcher has developed the below model based on previous researches and therefore, the below framework conceptualizes the research gap by taking supervisors leadership styles of Transactional, Transformational, Laissez fair and Autocratic, impact on labourers' Performance. Here Supervisors Leadership styles have been taken as the independent variables whereas the Labourers' performance as the dependent variable.

Figure-1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher

The total population consists of 415 labourers of selected EEs office. With the help of slovin's formula the sample size of 204 has been calculated. For the leadership style, we used the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 1994) which contains 05 items for the transformational leadership style (Cronbach's alpha = 0.860), 05 items for the transactional leadership style (Cronbach's alpha = 0.897), 05 items for the laissez-faire leadership style (Cronbach's alpha = 0.938) and 05 items for the autocratic leadership style (Cronbach's alpha = 0.893). 10 items for the performance of labourers (Cronbach's alpha = 0.879).

Multiple regression is used for two or more independent variables to predict the outcome.

Multiple Regression: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$

Where;

Y = Labourers' performance

X1 = Transformational work supervisors' leadership style

X2 = Transactional work supervisors' leadership style

X3 = Laissez-faire work supervisors' leadership style

X4 = Authoritative work supervisors' leadership style

β_0 = Constant Term;

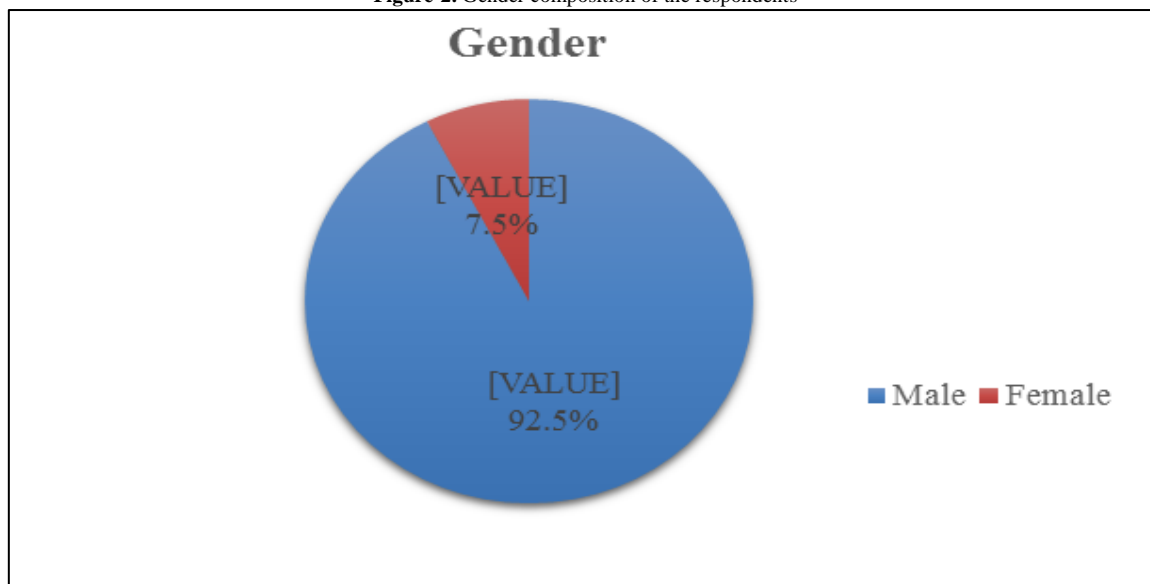
$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Beta coefficients;

ϵ = Error Term.

3. Results and Discussion

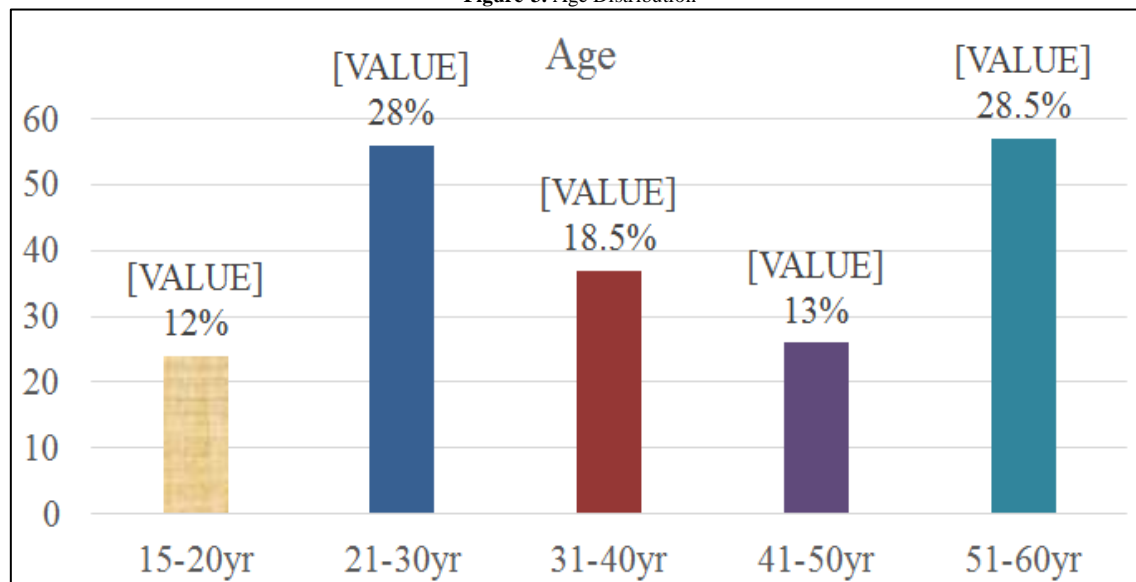
The study involved in to establish the gender composition of the respondents. Results are shown in [Figure 2](#)

Figure-2. Gender composition of the respondents



From the results, it is noted that majority of the respondents as shown by 92.5% were males where as 7.5% were females. This shows that the respondents of this study were mainly dominated by male gender.

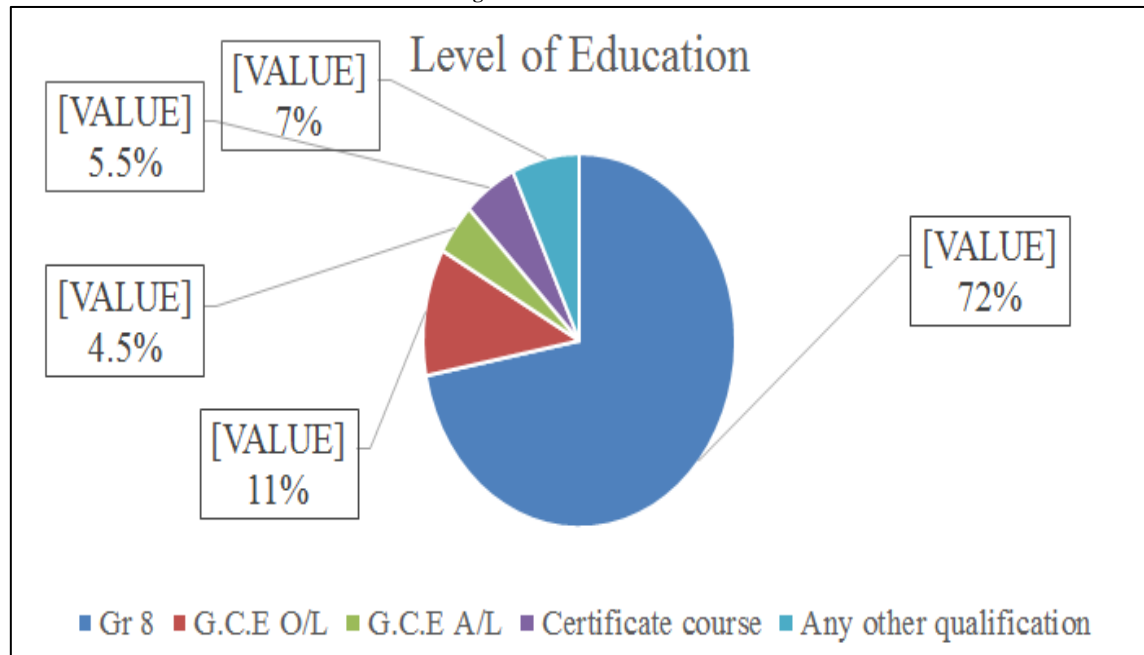
Figure-3. Age Distribution



From the results in figure 3 most of the respondents as shown by 28.5% were aged between 51 to 60 years, 28% of the respondents were aged between 21-30 years, 26% were 41 to 50 years old whereas 24% of the respondents were between 15-20 years. This implies that respondents were fairly distributed in terms of their age.

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of education. The figure 4 below summarizes the responses.

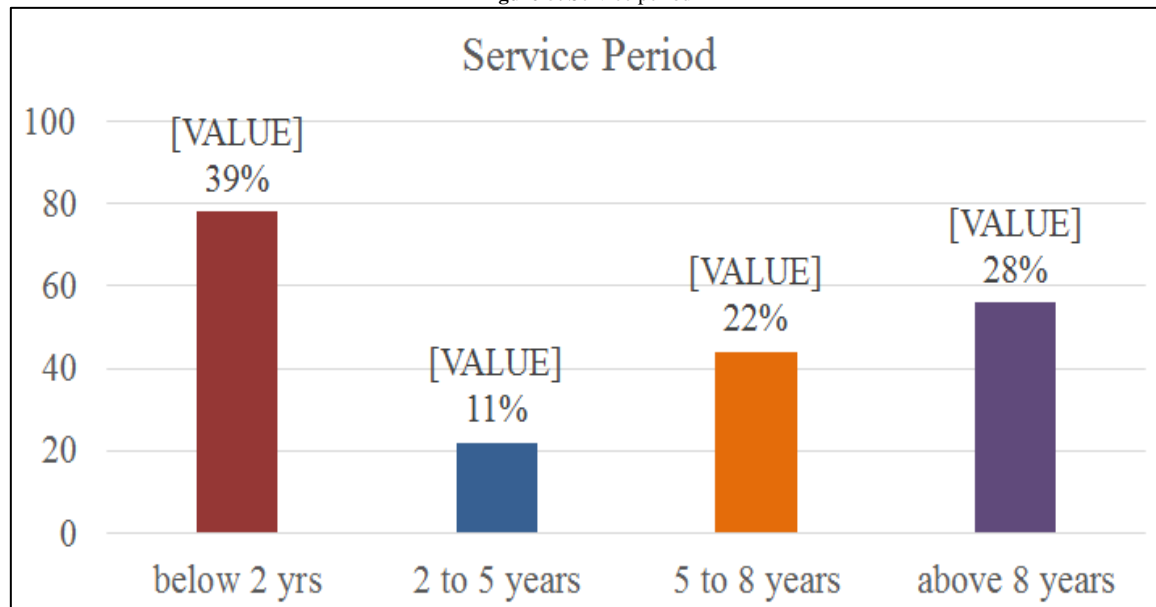
Figure-4. Level of Education



As shown in figure 4 the study revealed that majority of the respondents, 72% had complete only Gr 8 whereas, 22% of the respondents had attained G.C.E.O/L and 4.5 % of the respondents had attained G.C.E.A/L. This implies that most of respondents were educated at secondary level and therefore they were not in a position to understand themselves and respond to the research questions with ease. The Researcher had to explain about the questions and issue the questionnaire in Tamils in order to get their response.

This study sought to find out the duration of time that an individual had worked in the RDA. The findings are shown in figure 5 below.

Figure-5. Service period



As indicated in figure 5 majority of the respondents is 39% and they served in the RDA for below 2 years, 28% served in the RDA for above 8 years, 11% served in the RDA for a period of 2 to 5 years while 22% o indicated that they served in the RDA for a period for 5 to 8 years. These results imply that majority of the respondents have served for a good considerable period of time in the RDA which implied that they were in a position to give credible information relating to this study.

Table-2. Descriptive Statistics for Leadership styles and Labourers' performance

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TFL	2.60	5.00	3.9090	.43227
TSL	3.00	4.80	3.8860	.41938
LFL	1.00	2.60	1.8100	.34423
AL	1.00	2.00	1.4960	.20833
PER	3.42	4.79	4.0796	.28096
PEFF	4.00	5.00	4.5000	.34364
PEFE	3.00	5.00	3.9950	.50952
PINO	2.50	5.00	3.8100	.73594
PRES	3.00	5.00	4.0133	.51536
Leadership	2.30	3.20	2.7752	.18211

As per the Table 2, descriptive statistics show that the mean for the Transformational leadership style, Transactional leadership styles, Laissez fair leadership style, Autocratic Leadership style and employees' performance is 3.9090, 3.8860, 1.8100, 1.4960 and 4.0796 respectively. The Standard Deviation of Transformational leadership style is quite high, i.e. 0.43227. The value of standard deviation of Autocratic Leadership style is low as 0.20833. Maximum value of Transformational leadership style, Transactional leadership styles and labourers' performance are 5, 4.8, 4.79 and Laissez fair leadership style, Autocratic Leadership style are 2.6 and 2.

First research objective was to identify the relationship between the work supervisors' leadership styles and performance of labourers' and was analyzed by correlation analysis.

Table-3. Correlation Analysis

		TFL	TSL	LFL	AL	Leadership style	PER
leadership	Pearson Correlation	.608**	.587**	.507**	.217**	1	.188**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.002		.008
PEFF	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.356**	.047	-.161*	.375**	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.511	.022	.000	.000
PEFE	Pearson Correlation	.079	.118	-.122	-.033	.047	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.269	.096	.085	.639	.505	.000
PINO	Pearson Correlation	-.017	-.022	.059	.008	.008	.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.814	.761	.406	.909	.912	.000
PRES	Pearson Correlation	.037	.114	.009	.038	.103	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	.108	.903	.594	.148	.000
PER	Pearson Correlation	.142*	.200**	.002	-.042	.188**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.004	.981	.557	.008	

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to the result of the Pearson's correlation which is shown in the Table 3 indicated the relationship between Leadership Styles and Labourers' performance. Correlation values show that Leadership style is correlated to the labourers performance at the level of 0.01, indicating that there is a significant positive correlation (0.188) between them. Transformational leadership strongly and positively correlated (0.142) with overall employee performance at the level of 0.05 level ($P < 0.05$) and Transaction Leadership style significantly correlated (.200) with labourers performance at the level of 0.01 level ($P < 0.01$). Further, the table revealed that Leadership style of LFL and AL are not significantly correlated with labourers performance. At the same time four leadership styles are significantly correlated with leadership styles at the level of 0.01 and variables of labourers' performance also significantly correlated with labourers performance. In the meantime, efficiency of labourers performance significantly correlated with transactional and transformational leadership styles at the level of 0.01. AL shows the negative significant impact on efficiency of labourers performance at the level of 0.05.

Second objective is to examine the impact of work supervisors' leadership styles on the labourers' performance by multiple regression analysis. The multiple regression analysis was carried out to estimate the effect of leadership styles (independent variables) on labourers' performance (dependent variable). Results are presented in Tables 4. The summary of the model in which the item of interest is the R^2 statistics, which is .106. This suggests leadership styles accounts for 10.6% of the variation in labourers' performance.

Table-4. Model Summary of the independent variable of leader ship styles and dependent variable of labourers' performance

Details	Overall Leadership Styles	TFL	TSL	LFL	AL
R	.188 ^a	.142 ^a	.200 ^a	.002 ^a	.042 ^a
R ²	.106	.086	.099	.000	.022
Adjusted R ²	.101	.081	.092	-.005	.017
F	7.291	4.074	8.280	.001	.346
Significant(P)	.008	.045 ^b	.004	.981 ^b	.557 ^b
T	2.700	2.018	2.877	.024	-.588
Constant (B)	3.280	3.719	3.558	4.077	4.164
Coefficients	.291	.130	.193	-.001	-.016

a. Dependent Variable: Labourers' performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leader ship styles, TFL, TSL, LFL and AL

Table 4 shows the regression analysis. R² measures that, how much of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. In this study, we have found TFL's R² =0.086, it means 8.6% of variation of labourers performance can be explained the changes by TFL, TSL's R² =0.099, it means 9.9% of variation of labourers performance can be explained the changes by TSL, LFL's R² =0.002, it means 0.2% of variation of labourers performance can be explained the changes by LFL, AL's R² =0.022, it means 2.2% of variation of labourers performance can be explained the changes by AL. Besides this, adjusted R² is very closure to R², it suggests the addition of one independent variable makes a contribution in explaining the variation in dependent variable. The remaining 91.4%, 90.1%, 99.8% and 97.8% variance with attributes to other factors.

From the **table 4**, the P statistic is the regression mean square (MSR) divided by the residual mean square (MSE). If the significance value of the P statistic is small (smaller than, say 0.01) then the independent variables do a very good job explaining the variation in the dependent variable. The significance value of P is smaller than 0.01 then leadership styles can be explained in the labourers performance. It means leadership style is highly significant impact on labourers performance of RDA. The above analysis revealed that the leadership style is significant impact on labourers performance.

Table-5. Multi regression analysis

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β (Beta)		
(Constant)	3.280	.312		10.497	.000
TFL	.085	.046	.130	1.860	.044
TSL	.129	.047	.193	2.761	.006
LFL	-.001	.057	-.001	-.010	.992
AL	-.021	.095	-.016	-.226	.821

a. Dependent Variable: PER

Multiple Regression: $Y = 3.280 + .085 + .129 - .001 - .021 + \epsilon$

Y = Labourers' performance

X1 = Transformational work supervisors' leadership style

X2 = Transactional work supervisors' leadership style

X3 = Laissez-faire work supervisors' leadership style

X4 = Authoritative work supervisors' leadership style

If Transformational work supervisors' leadership style, Transactional work supervisors' leadership style, Laissez-faire work supervisors' leadership style and Authoritative work supervisors' leadership style are 0, Labourers' performance is to be 3.280 units, further Transformational work supervisors' leadership style is increased by one unit, the Labourers' performance will be increased by .085 units, Transactional work supervisors' leadership style is increased by one unit, the Labourers' performance will be increased by 0.129 units, Laissez-faire work supervisors' leadership style is increased by one unit, the Labourers' performance will be decreased by .001 units and Authoritative work supervisors' leadership style is increased by one unit, the Labourers' performance will be decreased by 0.021 units. Therefore, it can be said that there are positive and negative relationship between variables some are significant and insignificant.

4. Conclusion

The findings show that transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style are the most exhibited style at the RDA followed by the laissez-faire and authoritative. Employee performance is above average. Transformational leadership style significantly positively affected employee performance while transactional leadership style affected employee performance strongly significantly positively. Authoritative and laissez faire leadership styles exhibited insignificant negative and positive effects on employees' performance, respectively (Anyango, 2015; Sooriyakumaran *et al.*, 2020). Out of the four leadership styles, Transformational and Transactional leadership styles were significantly impact on labourers performance and laissez fair and authoritative

leadership styles were not impact on labourers performance. At the same time overall leadership styles were significantly impact on labourers performance.

The leaders or supervisors should be aware of what is important for the subordinates and the RDA as a whole and encourage the labourers to see the opportunities and face the challenges around them positively.

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