



Effect of Leadership Styles on Project Team Performance in Rwanda: A Case of Murram Road Relocation Project, Kicukiro District (2022-2024)

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Abstract: The study assessed how leadership styles influenced project team performance in Murram Road Relocation Project in Kicukiro District. Five leadership approaches were examined: transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire. The work was informed by Transactional Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Situational Leadership Theory, Adaptive Leadership Theory and Authentic Leadership Theory. A mixed-methods design combined descriptive and explanatory approaches; however, the manuscript reports the questionnaire-based quantitative results. A universal sampling approach was used for project personnel, and 112 employee questionnaires were returned, giving a 100% response rate. The instrument was piloted with 12 employees of the IDP Model Village Project in Kicukiro District and achieved Cronbach's Alpha of 0.886 across 37 items. Multiple regression showed that transformational leadership had a positive significant effect on project team performance ($B = 0.499$, $\beta = 0.484$, $t = 19.337$, $p = 0.000$), democratic leadership had a significant negative effect ($B = -0.078$, $\beta = -0.077$, $t = -5.349$, $p = 0.000$), and autocratic leadership had the strongest positive effect ($B = 0.486$, $\beta = 0.604$, $t = 31.251$, $p = 0.000$). Transactional leadership was positive but insignificant ($B = 0.012$, $\beta = 0.011$, $p = 0.596$), as was laissez-faire leadership ($B = 0.013$, $\beta = 0.011$, $p = 0.275$). The model was significant ($R = 0.995$, $R^2 = 0.990$, $F = 2160.737$, $p = 0.000$). The study recommends leadership development that combines inspiration, disciplined supervision, timely decision-making, clear communication, employee motivation, accountability, and adaptive leadership to strengthen project team performance.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Autocratic Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Project Team Performance

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1. Introduction

Project teams depend on leadership to translate plans, resources and technical requirements into coordinated action. Leadership style influences how decisions are made, how responsibilities are communicated and how people respond to changing project demands. Transactional leaders rely on expectations, monitoring and rewards; transformational leaders build commitment through vision and motivation; democratic leaders encourage participation; autocratic leaders centralize authority; and laissez-faire leaders allow substantial

employee autonomy. Each approach can be useful under particular conditions, but their effects on performance may differ according to the nature of the project and the capability of the team (Northouse, 2022; Adamu et al., 2022).

Infrastructure projects place particular demands on leaders because implementation requires simultaneous control of schedules, technical standards, safety, resources and stakeholder expectations. When leadership is unclear, project teams may experience weak coordination, delayed decisions and inconsistent accountability. By contrast, effective leadership can

strengthen communication, clarify roles and support timely completion. International project evidence associates leadership with motivation, collaboration and achievement of planned outcomes, although the relative value of different styles varies with project complexity and working conditions (Ahmed et al., 2023; Müller et al., 2023).

Transformational leadership has received considerable attention because it encourages project personnel to identify with a shared purpose and contribute beyond routine task requirements. Leaders who communicate a clear vision, support creative problem-solving and recognize individual contributions can increase commitment and ownership. Aga et al. (2022) linked transformational leadership with project success through team building, while Ahmad et al. (2022) emphasized the contribution of transformational project leadership to successful project outcomes. Such evidence suggests that inspiration and individual support can be particularly useful where projects face uncertainty and coordination demands.

Transactional and directive forms of leadership remain relevant in construction environments because many tasks require compliance with specifications and clear accountability. Reward-based supervision can reinforce performance standards, while autocratic leadership may speed up decisions when urgent technical action is required. At the same time, excessive control can reduce participation and creativity, just as insufficient supervision under laissez-faire leadership can weaken follow-up. Research in construction and public organizations therefore shows that leadership effectiveness depends on how authority, motivation and autonomy are balanced within the operational context (Ushizimpumu, 2024; Khajeh, 2023).

Democratic leadership introduces different logics by involving team members in discussion and decision-making. Participation can improve ownership, information sharing and acceptance of project decisions, particularly where employees possess specialized knowledge. Haider (2023) found that democratic leadership can enhance project success through knowledge sharing, while Asiimwe (2023) associated participative leadership with creativity and organizational growth. Nevertheless, intensive consultation can also slow decisions when work is highly time-sensitive, creating a potential tension between participation and implementation speed.

Rwandan infrastructure projects require strong coordination among managers, technical teams and field workers. Road works are particularly sensitive to sequencing, safety, material availability, supervision and time control. Evidence from Rwanda indicates that leadership practices, communication and project coordination remain important to infrastructure

performance (Munyaneza & Ndikumana, 2022; MININFRA, 2024). Murram Road Relocation Project in Kicukiro District therefore provided a useful setting for examining how different leadership approaches operate within a deadline-driven project environment.

Murram Road Relocation Project also involved a heterogeneous workforce composed of managerial, technical, administrative and field roles. Such diversity creates different expectations of leadership. A site worker may value clear and immediate instructions, while an engineer may require discretion to apply professional judgment and a manager may need collaborative information before making a strategic decision. Examining several leadership styles together was therefore more appropriate than evaluating one style in isolation, because the same project can require different behaviours across roles and circumstances.

Existing studies have investigated leadership in organizations, construction projects and public institutions, but much of the evidence comes from settings outside Rwanda or examines fewer leadership styles at a time. Limited evidence compares transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership together within a road relocation project. This study addressed that limitation by examining the five leadership styles within Murram Road Relocation Project in Kicukiro District during 2022-2024.

1.1 General Objective

The general objective was to assess the effect of leadership styles on project team performance in Murram Road Relocation Project, Kicukiro District.

1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the effect of transactional leadership style on performance of Murram Road Relocation Project.
2. To analyse the effect of transformational leadership style on performance of Murram Road Relocation Project.
3. To assess the effect of democratic leadership style on performance of Murram Road Relocation Project.
4. To find out the effect of autocratic leadership style on performance of Murram Road Relocation Project.
5. To establish the effect of laissez-faire leadership style on performance of Murram Road Relocation Project.

2. Literature Review

This review organizes theoretical perspectives and objective-specific empirical evidence used to interpret the relationship between leadership styles and project team performance.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional Leadership Theory explains leadership as an exchange in which expected performance is reinforced through rewards, monitoring and corrective action. In project settings, the theory is useful where tasks are structured and compliance with standards must be maintained. Clear expectations can support accountability, although reliance on external rewards may not create the deeper commitment needed for complex problem-solving. The theory therefore provides a basis for assessing whether supervision and reward mechanisms independently explain project team performance (Bass & Riggio, 2022; Northouse, 2022).

In practice, transactional leadership is most visible where leaders define expected outputs, observe progress and respond to deviations. Road construction involves many activities that can be monitored against measurable standards such as task completion, quality compliance and adherence to schedules. The theory therefore provides a logical explanation for why transactional practices may be common even when their independent regression effect is weak. Their contribution may lie in establishing the baseline structure within which other leadership approaches operate.

2.1.2 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Leaders seek to raise follower commitment beyond routine compliance by connecting daily work with a wider purpose. This perspective is well suited to project teams that must adapt, cooperate and solve emerging problems. In Murram Road Relocation Project, the theory helps explain how motivation, encouragement and support may strengthen ownership and performance (Aga et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022).

The theory is especially relevant when project teams must cope with uncertainty or maintain commitment during demanding implementation periods. A transformational leader can connect individual tasks with the wider value of the project, encourage employees to propose solutions and provide support where performance barriers emerge. These mechanisms can increase discretionary effort that is not produced by formal supervision alone. For this reason,

transformational leadership was expected to complement rather than simply replace transactional controls in the project.

2.1.3 Situational Leadership Theory

Situational Leadership Theory argues that no single style is universally effective. Leaders should adapt the amount of direction and support they provide according to employee readiness and task conditions. The theory is relevant to road relocation work because experienced technical staff may need autonomy in some activities, while urgent or high-risk tasks may require close supervision and direct instructions. It therefore helps explain why different leadership styles may produce different effects within the same project environment (Northouse, 2022).

The road-project setting illustrates this contingency particularly clearly. Routine or familiar tasks may allow greater delegation, while safety incidents, design adjustments or schedule pressure may call for immediate direction. Likewise, inexperienced staff may require more guidance than highly skilled engineers or field specialists. Situational Leadership Theory therefore helps interpret the different regression signs as evidence that leadership effectiveness depends on fit between behaviour and task conditions rather than on a universally superior style.

2.1.4 Adaptive Leadership Theory

Adaptive Leadership Theory focuses on the capacity of leaders to respond to changing conditions, uncertainty and problems that cannot be solved through routine technical procedures alone. Infrastructure projects frequently encounter unforeseen constraints, requiring leaders to adjust priorities, coordinate stakeholders and mobilize teams around new solutions. The theory complements the five-style framework by highlighting the importance of flexibility when applying directive, participative or motivational leadership approaches.

Adaptive leadership is also useful where the problem itself changes during implementation. Construction teams may face weather disruption, resource shortages, community concerns or unforeseen technical conditions that cannot be solved through a fixed procedure. Leaders must diagnose the situation, mobilize relevant expertise and adjust working arrangements. Although adaptive leadership was not estimated as a separate variable, it provides a wider lens for understanding why managers may need to move between participative, transformational and directive behaviours across project phases.

2.1.5 Authentic Leadership Theory

Authentic Leadership Theory emphasizes self-awareness, transparency, ethical conduct and consistency between values and actions. Trust becomes especially important when teams operate under pressure and depend on leaders for fair decisions and credible communication. This perspective contributes to the study by showing that leadership effectiveness depends not only on authority or motivation, but also on the quality of relationships and confidence that leaders build with project personnel (Northouse, 2022).

Authenticity can strengthen the effectiveness of other leadership styles because employees are more likely to accept difficult instructions or performance expectations when leaders are perceived as fair and consistent. In a project where autocratic behavior may sometimes be necessary for urgent decisions, transparency and ethical conduct can reduce the risk that directive leadership is interpreted as arbitrary. Authentic Leadership Theory therefore adds a relational dimension to the study's behavioural leadership framework.

2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical review in this study focuses on transactional leadership style and project team performance, transformational leadership style and project team performance, democratic leadership style and project team performance, autocratic leadership style and project team performance, and laissez-faire leadership style and project team performance and project performance.

2.2.1 Transactional Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Aga et al. (2022) conducted a study titled Transformational Leadership and Project Success: The Moderating Role of Project Complexity. The study aimed to examine the effect of transformational leadership on project success and determine whether project complexity moderates this relationship. The study adopted a quantitative research approach and used empirical studies to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and project success across different project contexts. The findings revealed that transformational leadership had a significant positive relationship with project success, particularly through motivation, team commitment, communication, and a shared vision. The study concluded that transformational leadership is an important determinant of project success, although its effectiveness can vary according to project characteristics and complexity. However, the study mainly concentrated on transformational leadership and project success rather than comparing transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles in relation to project team performance. This creates a content and contextual gap

that the present study addresses in Murram Road Relocation Project in Rwanda.

Sharma et al. (2025) conducted a study titled Role of Leadership Style on Team Performance at Construction Site in Sikkim. The study aimed to examine how different leadership styles influence team performance in construction projects, with particular attention to leadership approaches such as transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership. The study adopted a quantitative research approach and collected primary data from construction project participants using structured research instruments. The findings indicated that leadership style plays an important role in construction team performance by influencing communication, motivation, coordination, decision-making, and task completion. The study concluded that appropriate leadership practices are essential for improving teamwork and achieving construction project objectives. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in India and did not specifically examine the Rwandan infrastructure context or performance of teams involved in road relocation projects. Therefore, the present study fills a contextual gap by examining the effects of the five leadership styles on project team performance in Murram Road Relocation Project in Rwanda.

Kakwezi & Kwena (2022) conducted a study on the role of leadership skills on performance of project-driven organizations in Rwanda, the Case of the Business Development Fund. This research aimed to establish the role of project leadership skills and performance of project driven organization in Rwanda with a specific objective to determine the influence of communication skills on performance of project driven organization, ascertain the influence of leadership skills on performance of project driven organization, assess the influence of negotiation skills on performance of project driven organization and analyze effect of leadership style on performance of project driven organization. The study adopted a descriptive research design, and correlation analysis was used to test research hypotheses. The target population was 92 respondents, with a sample size of 92 respondents, comprised of BDF employees in Kicukiro, Gasabo, and Nyarugenge Districts. The study found that use of leadership style ($\beta=.263$, $t=4.534$, $p=.000<0.05$) is significant, leadership skills ($\beta=.229$, $t=3.469$, $p=.001<0.05$), communication skills ($\beta=.295$, $t=5.462$, $p=.000<0.05$) are statistically significant while negotiation skills ($\beta=.054$, $t=1.125$, $p=.267>0.05$) is not statistically significant to predict performance of project driven organization in Rwanda, therefore recommending different organization and economic development players to enhance the leadership capacity for the employees to be successful in the projects implemented and for further research to conduct deep analysis to find out the perception of negotiation skills on performance of project (Kakwezi & Kwena).

Mwakasungula (2023) employed descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the relationship between transactional leadership style and employee job satisfaction. The study used Morogoro Municipal Council as a case study, from which data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire from 92 respondents. The regression analysis result showed that transactional leadership style was found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction.

Khan et al. (2023), in their study on Pakistanian organizations, concluded that both transactional and transformational leadership styles had positive influences on organizational performance, although the transactional leadership style had a stronger influence on organizational performance than the transformational leadership style because the transactional leadership style motivates and helps employees towards improved organizational performance using rewards.

2.2.2 Transformational Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Angela (2023) conducted a study on the Role of Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance within Retail Stores in Kenya: A Case of Uchumi Retailers. The main objective of this study was to investigate the role of leadership styles on organizational performance within retail stores in Kenya. The Specific Objectives for this study were to determine how transformational leadership style affects organizational performance at Uchumi Retailers; to establish how transactional leadership style affects organizational performance at Uchumi Retailers. To find out how the laissez-faire leadership style affects organizational performance at Uchumi Retailers. To examine the extent to which the autocratic leadership style affects organizational performance at Uchumi Retailers. Research used a descriptive research design as it is suitable for the study content and subject focus. The target population was 101 employees of the retail company. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure all categories are equitably represented in the sample. It used a questionnaire as a form of the area of study distributed to the respective target sample of respondents. Piloting is done to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. Data collection is basically gathering information relevant to research. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the Uchumi Retailers staff. The data collected was analyzed using simple qualitative and quantitative methods and was presented using tables, figures, and charts. Authoritative leadership is common at Uchumi Supermarkets to some extent (Angela, 2023). From the findings, the respondents indicated minimal close contact with their supervisors as compared to transformational leadership, where staff would be in close contact with their supervisors. Laissez-faire leadership at Uchumi Supermarket is significantly limited. From the findings, transformational leadership is limited at Uchumi Supermarket, implying stagnation and stalled processes

in terms of service delivery. Further, the study findings indicate that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation and individual consideration are limited at Uchumi Supermarkets. Uchumi Supermarket is required to adapt to a democratic model at the supervisory levels. There is a need for equitable gender balance in supervisor-level positions appointed (Angela, 2023).

Zhao et al. (2023) adopted a meta-analysis approach to systematically analyze the reasons for the differences in the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and project success in China. Through the adoption of the meta-analysis approach, they investigated 31 independent studies with a total sample size of $N = 6475$. The results reveal that TL positively affects project success, and leadership charm is the primary driver of TL. Research provides an empirical perspective to help project leaders select management talents, regulate leaders' words and deeds, and cultivate technical and soft leadership skills. Besides, this paper proposes a unique and nuanced view of the relationship between TL and project success, enhancing people's understanding of TL's role in influencing project success.

Eyerusalem (2023) conducted a study on the Effect of Leadership Style on Project Performance: Case of Ethiopian Road Authority (ERA). The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of leadership style on project performance. The study adopted an explanatory research design along with a quantitative research approach to address the research questions. As the population size is limited, researchers have employed a census survey. Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather data. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS Version 20. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. The descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percent, mean, and standard deviation, were used for describing the demographic characteristics of respondents and the overall perception of respondents on the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The inferential statistics, like Pearson correlation and simple linear regression, were used to show the relationship between independent and dependent variables and to determine the effect of independent variables (LS) on the dependent variable (PP). The findings of the study indicated that transformational and Laissez-faire leadership styles positively and significantly affect performance of the Mojo-Hawassa Road project. The result of the Pearson correlation coefficient also indicated that leadership styles were positively correlated with project performance, but leadership skills, leadership experience & transactional leadership styles did not significantly affect project performance (Eyerusalem, 2023).

Khan et al. (2023) employed a deductive approach and cross-sectional survey-based research to examine the impact of transformational leadership styles on project success, with a focus on private sector firms in the

construction industry. A simple random sampling technique is used to collect samples from the selected population, including project leaders, project directors, project managers, supervisors, and team members, with a sample size of 320 in the region of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Results of the analysis show that transformational leadership styles, with their dimensions, are significantly positively associated with project success.

2.2.3 Democratic Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Kayondo & Gachiri (2025) conducted a study on the effect of soft leadership styles on performance of a rural development project: A Case of Terimbere Rural Integrated Partnership Organization in Musanze District, Rwanda. This study aimed to investigate the effect of leadership styles on performance of the rural development project, a case of the Terimbere Rural Integrated Partnership (TRIP) organization in Musanze District. The study focuses on the effect of autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, free-rein leadership, and transformational leadership styles on project performance. This study used both descriptive and correlational research designs. The study population was 167 individuals, and 113 respondents were determined by the table of Krejcie & Morgan. Questionnaire and interview guides were used for data collection. Qualitative data were analyzed based on the answers of respondents, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that respondents agreed that there is effect ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.020$) of autocratic leadership style on project performance, they agreed that there is effect ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.862$) of democratic leadership style on project performance, there is effect ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.812$) of laissez-faire leadership style on project performance, and there is effect ($M=4.14$, $SD=0.861$) of transformational leadership style on project performance. The study concludes that autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, and transformational leadership significantly contribute to predicting and positively influencing the project performance (Kayondo & Gachiri, 2025).

Haider (2023) conducted a study on the impact of democratic leadership on project success in Pakistan. The study aimed to examine the impact of democratic leadership on project success through the mediating role of coworker knowledge sharing and the moderating role of project risk management. The study used a questionnaire to collect data from employees and respondents working in the software and IT industries in Pakistan. After data collection from 308 respondents, the data were then analyzed on SPSS and Amos for the measurement of the model's fitness. The result of this study indicates that an increase in democratic leadership would increase project success.

Asiimwe (2023) conducted a study on the relationship between democratic leadership style and small and medium enterprise growth. The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between democratic leadership style and small and medium enterprise growth in the top 100 KPMG SMEs in Kenya. A causal research design was employed to investigate the relationship between the independent variable, with key constructs being orientation towards teamwork, innovation and creativity, delegation of responsibilities, and transparency, and the dependent variable constructs being workforce growth, sales growth, and return on assets. From a target population of 553 owners and managers of the top 100 KPMG SMEs in 2022, using the stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 227 was obtained. The study relied on primary data that was collected using closed-ended questionnaires. The data was analyzed using Pearson's correlation, multiple regression, and chi-square techniques. The study findings established that the democratic leadership style and SME growth had a strong positive association. The study concluded that a democratic leadership style affected the overall performance of an organization as employees found satisfaction in their work, which positively affected their creativity and innovativeness, which in turn affected the overall success and growth of the organization. It was recommended that leaders of SMEs include employees in the decision-making process in order to facilitate the growth of the enterprise.

2.2.4 Autocratic Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Ushizimpumu (2024) conducted a study on the effect of Leadership Styles on Employees' Performance in Public Organizations of Rwanda, a case study of Rubavu District, 2020-2023. This research aims to assess the effect of leadership styles on employees' performance in public organizations of Rwanda. Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used. The target population was composed of 281 employees of Rubavu District working in public institutions (District and sector level). The sample size was 74, obtained by using Taro Yaman's formula. Data was analyzed using SPSS. The research objectives are to examine the leadership styles applied in Rubavu District 2020-2023, to find out the effect of leadership styles on employees' performance in Rubavu District 2020-2023, and to assess the challenges faced by Rubavu District in the process of leadership style and the solutions. To achieve these objectives, documentation, interviews, and questionnaire techniques were used. The findings of this study revealed that there are many types of leadership applied in Rubavu District, including transactional leadership style, autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and transformational leadership style. Findings further revealed that democratic leadership was seen to exist in Rubavu District. The study further revealed that respondents agreed that the types of leadership listed above are applied Rubavu District. The study also

indicated that the existing types of leadership in Rubavu District affected the employees' performance. Finally, the study found that there are various challenges facing the leadership styles in Rubavu District, such as communication gaps, resistance to change, performance measurement, balancing authority and approachability, and a diverse workforce. Among the solutions are leadership training, inclusive decision-making, clear communication channels, and conflict resolution training. Referring to the findings above, all hypotheses were verified and confirmed (Ushizimpumu, 2024).

Khajeh (2023) examined the impact of autocratic leadership styles on organizational performance. In this study, he employed both primary and secondary data. The primary research has been done using a quantitative approach with the help of a survey instrument based on a survey questionnaire. The secondary research has been done through a review of previously established literature to achieve the research objectives. The findings suggested that an autocratic leadership style had a positive relationship with organizational performance. It has been recommended that organizations use a leadership style that enhances the capabilities and abilities of their people.

Makena & Muchelule (2024) conducted a study on the influence of leadership styles on Donor Funded Projects Performance. A case of Meru County, Kenya. This study examined the influence of leadership style on donor-funded projects' performance in Meru County, Kenya. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 aided in the generation of results. The inferential statistics included a regression model, which established the relationship between variables. From the findings, it was concluded that transactional leadership influences donor-funded project performance. Many of the respondents thought there should be more strategic leadership support on the issue of factors influencing leadership styles on donor-funded projects' performance in the County. The study recommended that for an effective donor-funded project, there should be training on the importance of donor-funded project performance to be continuous, as there should be incentives to those who practice leadership styles to encourage donor-funded project performance. For further research, the researcher dealt with only the above factor, which involves practicing leadership styles to encourage donor-funded projects' performance in Meru County. There needs to be more areas to be looked at and re-examined in Meru County and Kenya as a whole. There is a need to use other methods of study to see whether the same results can be realized, and last but not least, this research was concentrated in Meru county; there is a need to have wider research on the topic covering a wider area to compare the findings.

Itunga and Awuor (2023) conducted a study on the effect of autocratic leadership style on employee performance

in a state corporation in Kenya. The study aimed at investigating the effect of autocratic leadership style on employee performance in a state corporation in Kenya. A descriptive research design was used as it was suitable for the study's content and focus. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure all categories were equitably represented in the sample. The target population was 283 respondents. A structured, self-completed research questionnaire was used for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used for data analysis. The study findings showed that the autocratic leadership style is the most exhibited style at the commission, followed by the laissez-faire style, and then the transactional leadership style, with the transformational leadership style coming last. The study recommends that the commission do away with the autocratic leadership style, as it would ruin the commission in the long term.

2.2.5 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Uwigeneye & Amolo (2025) conducted a study on leadership Styles and Performance of Agro-Processing Projects. The research aimed at evaluating the influence of leadership styles of Laissez-Faire, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership approaches on performance of Agro-processing Projects in Musanze District, Rwanda. The research was based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. The research employed descriptive surveys and correlational research methodologies. Structured questionnaires and interview guides were utilized to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from 208 participants, chosen using a mix of stratified, random, and purposive sampling, from a target population of 433 stakeholders involved in the SPF agricultural development initiative. The pilot study sought to improve the validity and reliability of the research instruments by pre-testing the questionnaire and interview guide on 21 participants, representing 10% of the sample size. Validity was verified via expert assessment, resulting in a content validity index of 0.76, while reliability was determined through the split-half method, attaining a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90, indicating the instruments' reliability and suitability for data collection. Descriptive statistics, including percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation, along with inferential statistics such as correlation and regression, were performed at a significance level of 0.05 using Stata/MP 13.0, while thematic content analysis of qualitative data was conducted for triangulation purposes. The results for three hypotheses were examined at an $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level, yielding the following outcomes: laissez-faire leadership ($P = 0.000 < 0.05$), transformational leadership ($P = 0.000 < 0.05$), and transactional leadership ($P = 0.000 < 0.05$) affect performance and were all rejected. The research findings indicate that agricultural initiatives have greatly benefited from the adoption of improved leadership approaches, specifically laissez-faire,

transformational, and transactional, to guarantee successful project execution and sustainability. It is suggested that the SPF project focus on inclusive leadership styles such as laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional to maintain success, while also investing in the training of their employees, particularly their project managers, inspiring workers, continuing to blend these leadership styles, and collaborating with research institutions for a promising future and advancement (Uwingeneye & Amolo, 2025).

Kadir (2020) conducted a study on the impact of laissez-faire on the success of projects in Malaysia. The study aimed at investigating the impact of laissez-faire on the success of projects. The study followed quantitative approaches, where a survey questionnaire was conducted with a sample size of 154 respondents from the project management team members who were involved in the MRT Project Phase 1 Sungai Buloh-Kajang using convenience sampling techniques. For the evaluation of leadership styles and project success, the questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS software. Demographic and descriptive techniques were adopted for data analysis, while Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were used to investigate relationships between variables in order to justify the hypotheses of the study. Findings show that laissez-faire leadership has a positive impact on project success.

Kasahun (2023) conducted a study on effect of leadership style on project performance at the Ethiopian Road Authority. The general objective was to examine the effect of leadership style on project performance. The study adopted an explanatory research design along with a quantitative research approach to address the research questions. As the population size is limited, researchers have employed a census survey. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Version 20. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percent, mean, and standard deviation were used for describing the demographic characteristics of respondents and their overall perceptions of dependent and independent variables. Inferential statistics like Pearson correlation and simple linear regression were used to show the relationship between independent and dependent variables and to determine the effect of independent variables (LS) on the dependent variable (PP). The findings of the study indicated that laissez-faire leadership styles positively and significantly affect performance of the Mojo-Hawassa Road project.

The empirical review reveals that leadership effects are highly context sensitive. Studies from organizational, agricultural, construction and infrastructure settings frequently report positive effects for transformational, democratic, autocratic or laissez-faire leadership, yet the direction and magnitude differ according to task urgency,

employee capability and project complexity. Relatively little evidence examines all five styles simultaneously in a Rwandan road relocation project. The present study addresses limitations by estimating their independent effects within one project team while controlling for the other styles.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodological procedures applied in examining the effect of leadership styles on project team performance, including the research design, study population, sampling design, data collection instruments, validity and reliability, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

The study combined descriptive and explanatory designs within a mixed-methods framework. The manuscript reports the questionnaire-based quantitative strand because the inferential tests were generated from employee questionnaire data. The explanatory component was used to estimate the independent effect of each leadership style on project team performance.

3.2 Study Population

The study targeted 112 employees of Murram Road Relocation Project drawn from different departments and units, including project management, design, construction, safety, finance and budgeting, legal, human resources and administration, general planning, monitoring and evaluation, internal audit, engineers and field workers. The population was considered appropriate because the employees were directly involved in project activities and were therefore able to provide relevant information on leadership styles and project team performance.

3.3 Sampling Design

The study applied universal sampling whereby all 112 employees in the target population were included in the study. This technique was appropriate because the population was manageable and the researcher intended to obtain information from the entire population rather than selecting only a portion of it.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire measured transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles together with project team performance. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Interviews with four project managers

formed part of the wider mixed-methods dissertation, but interview responses are excluded from this manuscript.

3.5 Pilot Study, Validity and Reliability

Before the main survey, the questionnaire was piloted with 12 employees of the IDP Model Village Project in Kicukiro District. The instrument was reviewed for clarity and relevance. Validity was assessed using the Content Validity Index (CVI), where 30 out of 37 items were rated as relevant, producing a CVI of 0.81, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.60 and confirmed that the questionnaire was valid. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.886 for 37 items. Since this value was above the recommended threshold of 0.70, the questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency and was considered reliable for the main study.

Quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Multiple linear regression and ANOVA estimated the combined and individual effects of the five leadership styles on project team performance. Hypotheses were evaluated at the 5% significance level using the rule that $p < 0.05$ led to rejection of the null hypothesis.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed University of Kigali procedures and obtained authorization from Murram Road Relocation Project before data collection. Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the study purpose, and identities were not disclosed. Collected information was treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes.

4. Results and Discussions

This section presents and interprets the findings obtained from employees of Murram Road Relocation Project. It reports the response rate and inferential statistical results used to determine how transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles influenced project team performance. The analysis includes the model summary, Analysis of Variance, regression coefficients, and decisions on null hypotheses.

4.1 Response Rate

The response rate was examined to establish the proportion of the targeted employees who successfully participated in the study and provided complete information for statistical analysis.

Table 1: Response Rate

Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
112	112	100.0

Table 1 shows that 112 questionnaires were distributed and all 112 were successfully returned, representing a response rate of 100.0%. This indicates full participation of the targeted employees of Murram Road Relocation Project. The complete response provided adequate information for analysing the five leadership styles and project team performance and ensured that the quantitative analysis was based on all employees included in the study sample.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were applied to determine the extent to which the five leadership styles explained variations in project team performance. Multiple linear regression and Analysis of Variance were used to assess the overall explanatory power and significance of the model, while the regression coefficients established the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of each leadership style.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.995 ^a	.990	.990	.04947

a. Predictors: (Constant), X5=Laissez-faire leadership style , X1=Transactional leadership style , X3=Democratic leadership style , X4=Autocratic leadership style , X2=Transformational leadership style

Table 2 shows a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.995$, indicating a very strong combined relationship between transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles and project team performance. The R^2 of 0.990 indicates that the five leadership styles jointly explained 99.0% of the variation in project team performance, while approximately 1.0%

was attributable to factors outside the model. The adjusted R^2 was also 0.990, confirming that the model maintained very high explanatory power after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard error of estimate of 0.04947 further indicates a relatively small level of prediction error.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	26.440	5	5.288	2160.737	.000 ^b
Residual	.259	106	.002		
Total	26.699	111			

a. Dependent Variable: Y=Murram Road Relocation Project team performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), X5=Laissez-faire leadership style, X1=Transactional leadership style, X3=Democratic leadership style, X4=Autocratic leadership style, X2=Transformational leadership style

Table 3 indicates that the overall regression model was statistically significant, with $F(5, 106) = 2160.737$ and $p = 0.000$. Since the probability value was below the 0.05 significance level, the five leadership styles, when considered jointly, significantly explained variations in project team performance. The regression sum of squares of 26.440 was substantially larger than the residual sum

of squares of 0.259, showing that most of the observed variation in project team performance was accounted for by the leadership variables included in the model. The findings therefore confirmed that the regression model provided a statistically significant explanation of project team performance.

Table 4: Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	.290	.073		3.983	.000
X1=Transactional leadership style	.012	.023	.011	.531	.596
X2=Transformational leadership style	.499	.026	.484	19.337	.000
X3=Democratic leadership style	-.078	.014	-.077	-5.349	.000
X4=Autocratic leadership style	.486	.016	.604	31.251	.000
X5=Laissez-faire leadership style	.013	.012	.011	1.096	.275

a. Dependent Variable: Y=Murram Road Relocation Project team performance

Table 4 shows differences in direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the five leadership styles. Transactional leadership had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on project team performance ($B = 0.012$, $\beta = 0.011$, $t = 0.531$, $p = 0.596$), indicating that changes in transactional leadership did not significantly predict performance when the other leadership styles were held constant. Transformational leadership had a positive and statistically significant effect ($B = 0.499$, $\beta = 0.484$, $t = 19.337$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating that stronger transformational leadership was associated with improved project team performance.

In contrast, democratic leadership had a statistically significant negative effect ($B = -0.078$, $\beta = -0.077$, $t = -$

5.349 , $p = 0.000$), implying that an increase in democratic leadership was associated with a reduction in project team performance when the other leadership styles were controlled. Autocratic leadership produced the strongest positive standardized effect ($B = 0.486$, $\beta = 0.604$, $t = 31.251$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that it was the strongest significant predictor of project team performance in the model. Finally, laissez-faire leadership had a positive but statistically insignificant effect ($B = 0.013$, $\beta = 0.011$, $t = 1.096$, $p = 0.275$). Overall, the results demonstrate that transformational and autocratic leadership significantly improved project team performance, democratic leadership had a significant inverse effect, while transactional and laissez-faire leadership did not independently produce statistically significant effects.

4.3 Decision on Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected when the corresponding p-value was below 0.05 and retained

when the p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05. The decisions were based on the regression coefficients, t-values, and probability values reported for each leadership style.

Table 5: Decision on Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis	p-value	Decision
H01: Transactional leadership has no significant effect on project team performance.	.596	Retained
H02: Transformational leadership has no significant effect on project team performance.	.000	Rejected
H03: Democratic leadership has no significant effect on project team performance.	.000	Rejected
H04: Autocratic leadership has no significant effect on project team performance.	.000	Rejected
H05: Laissez-faire leadership has no significant effect on project team performance.	.275	Retained

Table 5 shows that the null hypothesis concerning transactional leadership was retained because its p-value of 0.596 exceeded 0.05, indicating that transactional leadership did not have a statistically significant effect on project team performance. The null hypothesis for transformational leadership was rejected because $p = 0.000$, confirming a statistically significant positive effect. The null hypothesis for democratic leadership was also rejected because $p = 0.000$, although its regression coefficient showed that the significant effect was negative.

Similarly, the null hypothesis concerning autocratic leadership was rejected because $p = 0.000$ confirming a statistically significant positive effect on project team performance. However, the null hypothesis for laissez-faire leadership was retained because its p-value of 0.275 was above 0.05. Therefore, transformational, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles significantly influenced project team performance, while transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles did not demonstrate statistically significant independent effects.

4.4 Discussion of Research Findings

This section discusses the findings according to the five specific objectives of the study by relating the regression results to the corresponding leadership styles and comparing the findings with relevant empirical studies reviewed in the literature.

4.4.1 Transactional Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Transactional leadership produced a small positive but statistically insignificant effect. This indicates that rewards, routine supervision and corrective feedback may help maintain discipline without independently driving performance after the other leadership styles are considered. Adamu et al. (2022) similarly showed that project success depends on the wider pattern of leadership behaviour, communication and coordination rather than on a single control mechanism. Kakwezi and Kweni (2022) also found that leadership style

significantly influenced performance in a Rwandan project-driven organization. The result therefore supports using transactional leadership as a supporting control mechanism rather than the dominant leadership approach.

Adamu et al. (2022) likewise argued that leadership style influences project success through communication, coordination and clarity of expectations. The insignificant result in Murram project therefore does not imply that transactional practices are useless; rather, it suggests that their contribution is embedded in the wider leadership system. Rewards and monitoring may establish a minimum performance standard, while transformational or directive leadership provides the stronger motivational and decision-making effects captured by the regression model.

4.4.2 Transformational Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Transformational leadership had a strong positive and statistically significant effect, showing that project teams perform better when leaders communicate vision, motivate employees and provide individualized support. This is consistent with Aga et al. (2022), who associated transformational leadership with project success through team-building, and Ahmad et al. (2022), who linked transformational project leadership with stronger project outcomes through empowerment and self-leadership. The result also aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory, which expects performance to improve when followers identify with shared goals and are encouraged to contribute beyond routine requirements.

Ahmad et al. (2022) also found that transformational project leadership improves outcomes through empowerment and follower self-leadership. This reinforces the present evidence that inspiration and support are not merely interpersonal preferences but can translate into measurable project performance. For Murram Road Relocation Project, transformational leadership likely strengthened the willingness of team members to coordinate, solve problems and take ownership of tasks beyond formal instructions.

4.4.3 Democratic Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Democratic leadership had a significant negative effect in Murram Road Relocation Project. The result differs from Haider (2023), who found that democratic leadership can increase project success through knowledge sharing, and Asiimwe (2023), who reported a positive relationship between participative leadership and organizational growth. The contrast suggests that context matters: in a time-sensitive road project, extensive consultation may slow decisions that require rapid technical action. Situational Leadership Theory helps explain this pattern because the value of participation depends on task urgency, team capability and the decision environment.

Kayondo and Gachiri (2025) found positive effects of democratic leadership in a Rwandan rural development project, while Arshad et al. (2023) connected democratic project leadership with innovative work behaviour. The opposite direction observed in the present study therefore appears to be context-specific rather than evidence that democratic leadership is inherently ineffective. Road construction involves urgent site decisions, sequencing constraints and safety requirements; under such conditions, the time cost of extensive participation may outweigh its collaborative benefits.

4.4.4 Autocratic Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Autocratic leadership recorded the strongest positive effect, suggesting that clear authority, close supervision and rapid decisions were particularly effective in the road-project setting. Ushizimpumu (2024) found that leadership styles, including autocratic leadership, influenced performance in a Rwandan public organization, while Khajeh (2023) reported a positive relationship between autocratic leadership and organizational performance. Makena and Muchelule (2024) further emphasized the role of active leadership support in project performance. The finding is understandable in construction activities where safety, quality standards and deadlines require immediate compliance, although directive leadership should still be applied with clear communication and accountability.

Makena and Muchelule (2024) also associated active leadership support with stronger project performance in donor-funded projects, helping to explain why a highly directive approach could be effective in Murram setting. Nevertheless, the positive effect should not be interpreted as justification for unrestricted authoritarian behaviour. The practical lesson is that centralized decisions can be useful for urgent, technically constrained tasks when they are accompanied by clear communication, fairness and accountability.

4.4.5 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style and Project Team Performance

Laissez-faire leadership showed a positive but statistically insignificant effect. This differs from Kadir (2020), who found a positive contribution to project success in Malaysia, and Kasahun (2023), who reported a significant positive effect in an Ethiopian road project. Uwingeneye and Amolo (2025) also found significant effects for laissez-faire leadership in Rwandan agro-processing projects. The weaker result in Murram Road Relocation Project suggests that employee autonomy alone may be insufficient where activities require continuous coordination, supervision and rapid managerial intervention.

The contrast with Uwingeneye and Amolo (2025) is also instructive because their agro-processing project evidence showed significant effects for laissez-faire leadership. Differences in task structure may explain the divergence: agricultural or specialist teams may tolerate greater autonomy, whereas road relocation depends heavily on synchronized field activities and continuous supervision. In this context, laissez-faire leadership may remain useful for competent specialists but is unlikely to provide the coordination needed as a dominant project-wide style.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions drawn from the study findings in relation to the specific objectives and provides recommendations based on the established effects of the different leadership styles on project team performance in Murram Road Relocation Project.

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that leadership style is a major determinant of project team performance, but the direction and strength of influence differ considerably across leadership approaches. Transformational leadership improved performance by strengthening motivation, commitment and ownership, while autocratic leadership produced the strongest positive effect through direct control, close supervision and rapid decision-making. Democratic leadership was statistically significant but negative, suggesting that excessive consultation can reduce efficiency in a time-sensitive construction environment.

Transactional leadership supported structure and accountability but did not independently explain performance, and laissez-faire leadership likewise failed to produce a significant effect. Overall, the evidence indicates that Murram Road Relocation Project benefited most from leadership that combines inspiration with firm operational direction rather than relying primarily on rewards, extensive participation or limited supervision.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations presented below were developed from the key findings of the study and are intended to guide the improvements.

1. Project leadership should strengthen transformational practices by communicating a clear vision, recognizing employee contributions and encouraging practical problem-solving while maintaining accountability for project outputs.
2. Managers and site supervisors should preserve the useful elements of directive leadership for safety, quality and urgent decisions, but apply them with clear communication so that strong control does not unnecessarily reduce employee commitment.
3. Participatory decision-making should be structured around defined consultation periods and authority levels so that employees can contribute relevant knowledge without delaying urgent technical decisions.
4. Transactional rewards and supervision should be linked directly to measurable task completion and quality indicators, while laissez-faire practices should be limited to experienced employees and activities that can be safely performed with lower supervision.
5. Project management should institutionalize regular leadership-development sessions that help managers select and combine leadership approaches according to task urgency, workforce capability and project complexity.

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