

Principal Leadership Styles and its Effects on School Performances in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Cameroon

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Abstract:- The objective of the study was to investigate on the effects of principal leadership style on school performances in public and private secondary schools in Cameroon. The study brought out the following research problems: does the autocratic leadership style affect school performances?, do laissez-faire leadership style affect school performances?, does democratic leadership style affect school performances?, do situational leadership styles affect school performances?. The paper adopted a survey. A survey looks at the individual, group of people, groups and material to describe, analyse and interpret entities. The survey is also employed to enable the researcher study a large number of populations, one of the quantitative research models. The universe of this paper was made up of 426 certified secondary teachers in the Mfoundi Division in the Centre Region of Cameroon by the easily accessible sampling method (simple random sample) where every everybody had the same chance of being selected for the study. The data were obtained by using a questionnaire which was made up of three parts. Part one was the demographic information, for part two we had principal leadership and school performances and the last part was school performances. The questionnaire was analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) and smart partial least square – structural equation (PLS-SEM). The results of the study revealed that: Democratic leadership style affect school performances positively (path coefficient of 0,964), laissez-faire leadership styles affect school performances positively (path coefficient of 0,905), autocratic leadership style affects school performances positively (path coefficient of 0,955) and the situational leadership style affect school performances positively (path coefficient of 0,979). Finally, the results proposed situational leadership style as the best style that can be used by principal in order to improve on school performances since it had the highest path coefficient of 0.979. A model was proposed at the end of the study called “principal leadership style and school performances” as seen in figure 5.

Keywords:- Principal, Principal Leadership Style, School Performances.

I. INTRODUCTION

School Leadership is a basic concern for all organisations and institutions in different countries around the world. Consequently, it becomes a priority in education policy agendas, for it will play a key role in improving school performances by influencing on student graduation rate, promotion rate of student, student achievements, teachers' satisfaction [1]. In this light, the Cameroonian government had decided to provide quality educations to his citizens by creating the faculty of education in order to equip students in school leadership. Also, the requirement to improve student or school performances depends on the school principal. Therefore, the school principal plays a vital role as far as school performances in concern by managing all the resources available in a school. Leadership style is a way by which an individual lead a group of people in order to achieve a particular objective. Leadership styles vary depending on the character of a leader. Each leader has a different way of leading depending on his mood. So, leadership style can be described as “the king of behaviour and abilities which the manager has and which enable him to interact with the employees to achieve goals”. Reference [2] believe that decisions by leaders depends on four leadership styles namely; democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, autocratic leadership style and situational leadership style. Democratic leadership styles are characterised by coordination, cooperation and collaboration. Reference [3], describe autocratic leadership as a top-down administration where power is centralised to the principal. Laissez-faire is known for its free rein leadership where the principal empowers subordinate to take decision concerning school performances and the situational leadership styles deals with situational management. Here, principals take decision depending on the environment, situation etc. On the basis of this background, the research proposed to ask the following question, “to what extent does the principal leadership style affect school performances”? In order to solve this problem, the following research questions were proposed. The general research question was to examine the effects of principal leadership style on school performances in public and private secondary schools in Cameroon and the specific research questions were; does the

democratic leadership of principal affect school performances?, do the laissez-faire leadership of principals affect school performances?, does the autocratic leadership style of principal affect school performances? and lastly does the situational leadership of principal affect school performances?. The above research questions led to the following hypothesis: the general hypothesis of this study was there is a positive effect on school performances depending on the leadership style used by the school principal. The specific hypothesis was: democratic leadership affect school performances positively, laissez-faire leadership affect school performances positively, autocratic leadership style of affect school performances positively and the situational leadership affects school performances positively.

➤ *Autocratic or Authoritative Leadership Style:*

According to [4] and [5], an autocratic leader never allows staff decisions, and the leader is usually very far from staff. it is a leadership that is imposed on an organisation and it is sometimes referred to as coercive leadership [6]. Decision making is done by autocratic leaders; however, inputs from staff may be sought in the process, but hardly taken into consideration. This is because they are benevolent autocrats. Autocratic leadership style opined [7] is known for individual control over all decisions and little input from staff. typically, autocratic leadership make choices based on their own ideas and judgement and rarely accepts advice from followers.

➤ *Democratic or Participative Leadership Style:*

Democratic leaders are servants to staff and guide them in creating and embracing a vision for the organisation. They inspire and bring forth top performance and create a belief system of integrity, a cause beyond oneself, diversity of thought and inclusiveness for all races and [8]. Subsumed in this style according to Hoyle are moral leadership, leading with love and spiritual leadership. Moral leadership is based on dignity and respect for the right of others to self-determination within moral bounds of the organisation. Rather than an arbitrary set of rules to follow, moral leadership is a covenant to do right things for others and live that covenant in all human interactions. Also linked to democratic leadership is leading with love.

➤ *Laissez-Faire or Permissive Leadership Styles:*

No direction is offered to employees where there is laissez-faire leadership in the organisation. Decision-making processes are left to the subordinates. This type of leadership can be successful where members of a group are highly trained in their own areas of expertise [9]. Advantages of laissez-faire leadership style are that it leaves the group members free to make their own decision and perform their activities in the way they like without the direction of leaders. Some famous leaders were known for the frequent use of laissez-faire leadership style and they got positive results at the end. Some of these leaders were: Herbert Hoover, Queen Victoria and Warrant Buffett.

➤ *Situational Leadership Style:*

There are diverse complex situations in schools that demand diverse leadership skills [10]. The principal with adequate skills will assess the situation and choose the appropriate leadership style that will be effective for a situation rather than try to manipulate situations to fit a particular leadership style. Reference [11] claims that leadership in schools is a situational phenomenon as it is based on the collective perception of people working in the schools, linked to the norms and is affected by the rate of interactions among members of the school.

➤ *Indicators of School Performances:*

• *Discipline Referrals:*

In the Cameroonian context, discipline referrals are situations where the discipline master brings out a disciplinary report concerning student behaviours in school that is reports on students' absenteeism, the rate of student attendances in classes etc. Discipline master then propose to the principal for the organisation of a disciplinary council. So, in order to prevent this type of situation, the internal rules and regulations are made available for students in order to reduce such behaviour. To create this environment, many variables need to be addressed. These variables include classroom demographics, organisation, procedures, teachers' characteristic and the community of learners [12].

• *Attendance Rates:*

School attendance is the daily or regular learner participation in school activities [13]. Through regular school attendance, learners get to access consistent educational support for their academic attainment [14]. When learners attain academically, [15] observes that they recognised their identities and intersubjective awareness of their social and individual capabilities.

• *Graduation Rates:*

School graduation rates are considered as the most important way to determine the performance of a school, an institution or a good tool to determine school performances. Graduation rate refers to the percentage of students who move from one level to the other for example, Primary school to secondary schools, first cycle to second cycle and lastly second cycle to the university.

• *Teacher Satisfaction:*

Job satisfaction is an important topic in education research. It focuses on teachers' occupational attitudes, zeal for teaching and work enthusiasm, all of which affects the quality of education [16]. Job satisfaction is a combination of psychological and environmental circumstances [17]. The concept of job satisfaction has received much attention in recent times. It suggested that satisfied workers increase the productivity of an organisation [18].

• *School Drop Out:*

In the Cameroonian context, school drop out is when a student fails to earn a high school diploma. In practise, it can be a challenge to identify students who will drop out with

precision. Dropouts have a relatively high rates of mobility and school transfers can make graduation a achievement to track. Additionally, studies of school dropout often begin with high school students, but dropout occurs in the middle grades too.

• *Promotion Rate:*

In the Cameroonian context, promotion rate assesses the extent of students who are promoted to the next level or it is the proportion of students (total, male, female) in a given class of secondary who are promoted to the next class the following year.

• *Repetition Rate:*

Repetition rate in secondary schools is the proportion of student (total, male, female) in any class of secondary in a given school year and who also attend that same class the following year.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Methods:*

The study adopted a survey. A survey looks at the individual, groups, institutions and events in the field [19]. It was employed in this paper to enable the researcher study a large amount of population and have a greater statistical power. Moreover, it gives the researcher the ability to collect a large amount of information.

➤ *Research Sample:*

According to [20] sampling is the process of selecting a group of people, events, behaviour or other elements with which to conduct a study. The sampled used for this paper was the simple random sampling. According to [21] a simple random sample is a sample obtained from the population in such a way that the sample of the same size have equal chances of being selected. This was used to draw out 426 teachers working at different public and private

secondary schools in the Mfoundi division in the Centre region of Cameroon during the 2022-2023 academic year. According to the demographic information obtained from the sample group, it was observed that 237 participants were women and 189 were men. Also, 209 of these teachers where DIPES II holders and their average age ranged from 26-35 years and 162 teachers having 0-4 years professional experiences.

➤ *Data Collection Tool:*

The data collection tool for the study was the questionnaire and it was made up of three parts. Firstly, we had the demographic information that included questions on gender, educational level, age and teaching experiences. The second part was made up of questions on principal leadership styles and school performance divided into sub-parts: Democratic leadership style and school performances made up of 6 items, laissez-faire leadership style and school performances made up of 5 items, authoritative leadership style and school performances made up of 6 items and lastly the situational leadership style and school performance made up of 5 items giving a total of 22 items. The modalities used was the 4points Likert scale “strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, agree-3 and strongly agree-4”. These modalities measured the effects of leadership styles on school performances on a single form. The third part were made up of questions on school performances. We had 8 indicators and 8 items; Discipline referrals, attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate, repetition rate, promotion rate and teachers’ satisfaction. The modalities used was the 4points Likert scale “strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, agree-3 and strongly agree-4”

➤ *Data Analysis:*

Data was analysed using the SPSS program version 23 and the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the reliability of the items. The PLS-SEM was used for presentation of results.

III. RESULTS

➤ *Verification of Hypothesis 1: Democratic Leadership Style and School Performances.*

- *Democratic Leadership Style Affects School Performances Positively.*

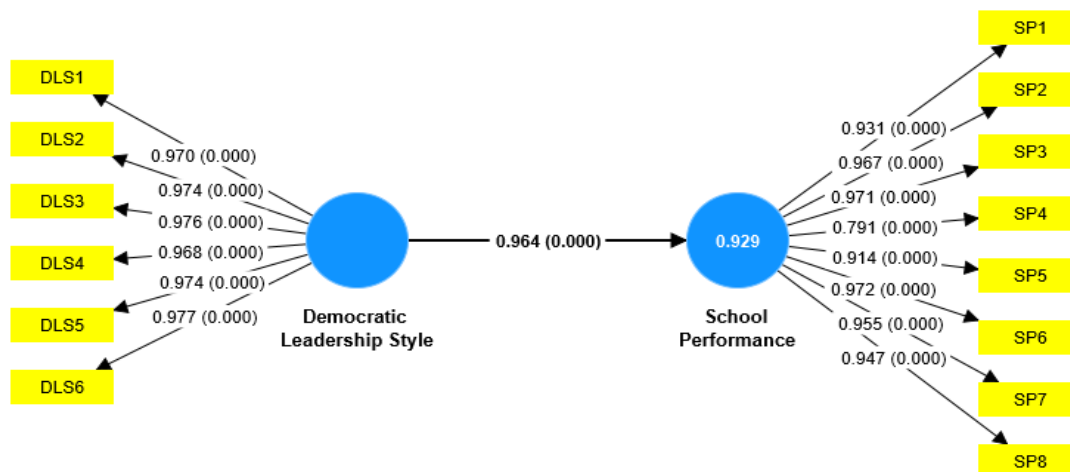


Fig 1 Path Modelling Estimations for Democratic Leadership Style and School Performances

Figure 1 presents path coefficient to ease the vivid interpretation of the relations that exist between independent variables and dependent variables. Looking at the structural model (the inner model), we observe that the path coefficient (p-values are less than the alpha 0.05). However, the hypothesised path relationship between democratic leadership style (DLS) and School Performance (SP) is significant. So, we can conclude that democratic leadership style affects school performances positively. The path coefficient of 0.964 indicates that democratic leadership style influences 96.4% of the variations that occur in school performances. And p-value of 0.000 indicates that there is no chance of making an error if we accept that the democratic leadership style affects school performances positively. Result obtained enable us to validate our first research hypothesis which state that democratic leadership style affects school performances positively.

- *Verification of Hypothesis 2: Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles and School Performances*
- *Laisser-Faire Leadership Style of Principals Affects School Performances Positively*

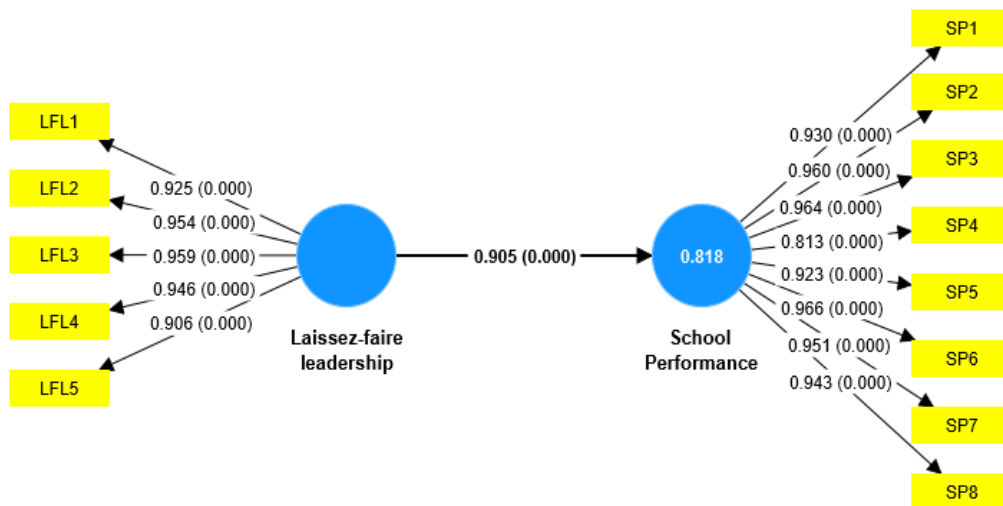


Fig 2 Path Modelling Estimations for Laissez-Fare Leadership Style and School Performances

Figure 2 present path coefficient to ease the vivid interpretation of the relation that exist between independent variables and dependent variables. Looking at the structural model (inner model), we observe that the path coefficient (p-value are less than alpha 0.05) However, the hypothesised path relationship between laissez-faire leadership style (LFL) and School Performance (SP) is significant. So, we can conclude that laissez-faire leadership style affects school performances positively. The path coefficient of 0.905 indicates that laissez-faire leadership style influences 90.5% of the variations that occur in school performances. And p-value of 0.000 indicates that there is no chance of making an error if we accept that laissez-faire leadership affects school performances. The result obtained enable us to validate our second hypothesis which states that laissez-faire leadership style affects school performances positively.

- *Verification Of Hypothesis 3: Authoritative Leadership Style And School Performances*
- *Authoritative Leadership Style Affects School Performances Positively*

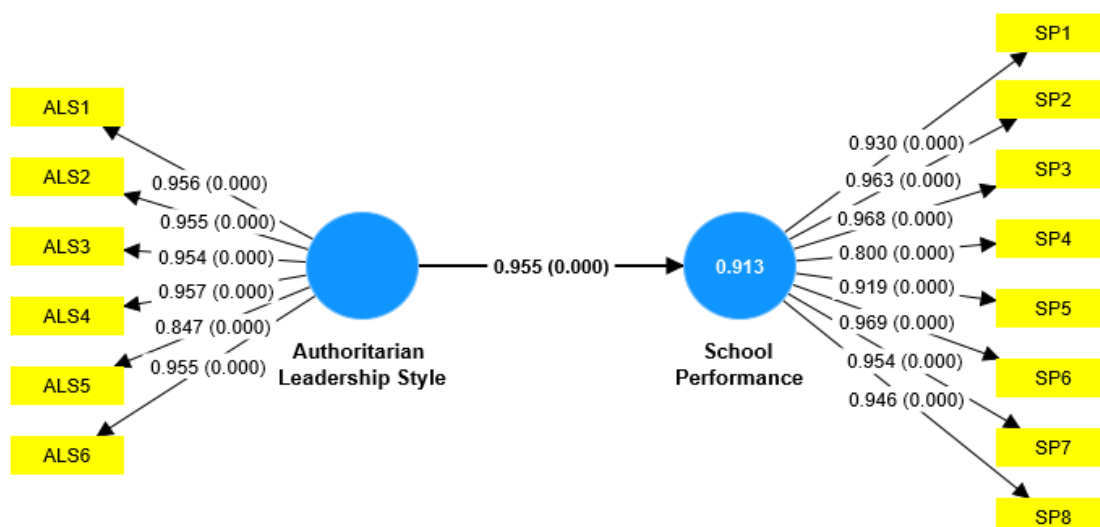


Fig 3 Path Modelling Estimation for Authoritative Leadership Style and School Performances

Figure 3 presents path coefficient to ease the vivid interpretation of the relations that exist between independent variables and dependent variables of the model. Looking at the structural model (inner model), we observe that the path coefficient (p-values are less than the alpha 0.05) However, the hypothesised path relationship between authoritative leadership style (ALS) and School Performance (SP) is significant. So, we can conclude that autocratic leadership style affects school performances positively. The path coefficient of 0.955 indicates that indicates that autocratic leadership style influences 95.5% of the variations that occur in school performances. And p-values of 0.000 indicates that there is no chance of making an error if we accept that authoritative leadership style affects school performances positively. The result obtained enables us to validate our third hypothesis which states that autocratic leadership style affects school performances positively.

- *Verification Of Hypothesis 4: Situational Leadership Style And School Performances*
- *Situational Leadership Style Affects School Performances Positively*

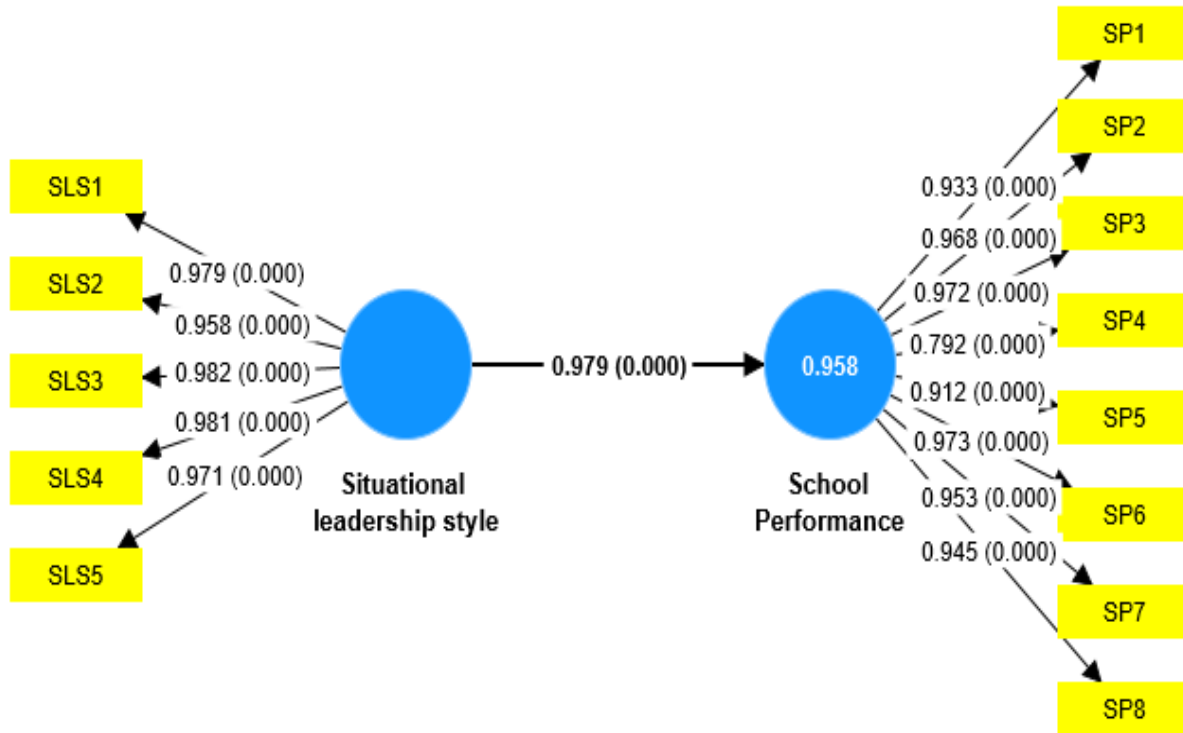


Fig 4 Path Modelling Estimation for Situational Leadership Style and School Performances

Figure 4 presents path coefficient to ease the vivid interpretation of the relations that exist between independent variables and dependent variables of the model. Looking at the structural model (inner model), we observe that the path coefficient (p-values are less than the alpha 0.05) However, the hypothesised path relationship between situational leadership style (SLS) and School Performance (SP) is significant. So, we can conclude that situational leadership style affects school performances positively. The path coefficient of 0.979 indicates that situational leadership style influences 97.9% of the variations that occur in school performances. And p-value of 0.000 indicates that there is no chance of making an error if we accept that situational leadership style affects school performances. The results obtained enable us to validate the fourth hypothesis which stated that situational leadership style affects school performances positively.

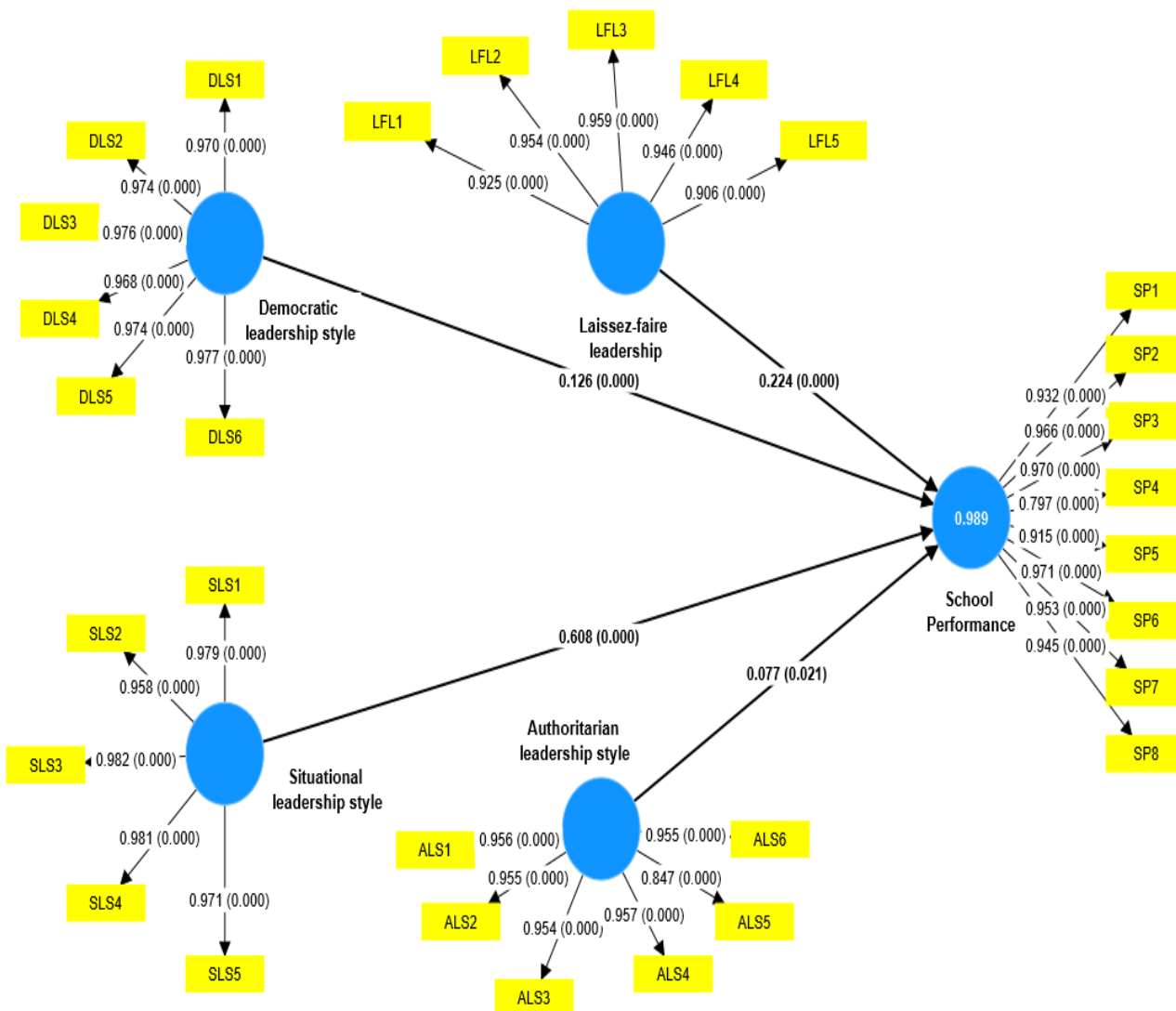


Fig 5 Proposed Model for Principal Leadership Style and School Performances

➤ Source: Computed by Researcher with PLS-SEM (2022)

Table 1 Result of Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Democratic _leadership style -> School _Performance	0.126	0.126	0.031	4.079	0.000
Laissez-faire _leadership -> School _Performance	0.224	0.224	0.017	13.065	0.000
Authoritative _leadership style -> School _Performance	0.077	0.077	0.033	2.302	0.021
Situational _leadership style -> School _Performance	0.608	0.608	0.020	30.652	0.000

Source: Computed by researcher using PLS-SEM (2022)

The proposed model above presents the link between independent variables and dependent variables showing the effects between each variable. School performances in the context of this study is the criterion variable and the proposed model shows that it can be predicted by Democratic leadership style by 0.126, laissez-faire leadership style by 0.224, authoritative leadership by 0.077 and lastly situational leadership by 0.608 with reference to internal model. Looking at the table of path coefficients, we see that all the p-values for the relationship are significant except for Authoritative _leadership style -> School _Performance. To conclude, we can say that the model is a good fit and could be significant in enhancing school performances if well employed in schools.

IV. DISCUSSION

This paper was aimed at finding out if democratic leadership style affects school performances positively. The result indicated that democratic leadership affects school performances positively in public and private secondary schools in Cameroon with a path coefficient of 0,964 as seen in figure 1. In other words, if there is any improvement in democratic leadership style, it will impact positively on school performances.

The findings of this study were supported by [22] that democratic leadership styles affected students' academic achievement and general school performances positively, because it motivates teachers to work with principals to achieve school objectives. The work of [23] also found that principals allowed teachers to take initiatives so as to improve student academic achievement through supporting and encouraging team work, good cooperation, good remuneration of all staff and motivation of students.

Again, this paper was aimed at finding out if laissez-faire leadership style affects school performances positively. The results indicated that laissez-faire leadership style affects school performances positively in public and private secondary schools in Cameroon with a path coefficient 0,905 as seen in figure 2. In other words, if there is any improvement in laissez-faire leadership style, it will impact positively on school performances.

Laissez-faire leadership style affects school performances positively in the sense that workers and subordinates who understand their job requirements and responsibilities are less engaged in role conflicts [24]. Thus, responsibilities of employees are fully satisfied leading to good performances.

Furthermore, when instructions are given and responsibilities of subordinates are explained, there is less ambiguity in the duties of subordinates [25]. So, when ambiguity is low, the performances of employees are more likely to increase. Several studies including [26] and [27] found out that the role ambiguity should be prevented to increase the performance of subordinates hence influencing school performances.

Also, this paper was aimed at finding out if autocratic leadership style affects school performances positively. The results indicated that autocratic leadership affects school performances positively in public and private secondary schools in Cameroon with a path coefficient of 0,955 as seen in figure 3.

The findings of this study were supported by [28], autocratic leadership style is also characterised by implementing the will of a leader, without taking into consideration the opinion of staff. Autocratic leaders decide alone, gives orders to staff and expect good result from them. For motivational purposes, autocratic leaders uses their positions to decide on the appropriate remuneration of

staff thus leading to good performances. The what, when and how a task should be done are most times clearly stated by autocratic leadership.

Lastly, this paper was aimed at finding out if situational leadership style affects school performances positively. The results indicated that situational leadership style affects school performances positively in public and private secondary school in Cameroon with a path coefficient of 0,979 as seen in figure 4.

Situational leadership style of principal affect school performances positively in the sense that, [29] declare that situational features of a school influence leadership effectiveness more than the behaviour of leaders. A situational leader is a leader who should act according to the needs of a particular situation [30]. Therefore, the methods and styles used by a situational leader to lead an organisation should depend on the situation of the organisation. The choice of any style is determined by the situational variable identified by the leader. A model was proposed at the end of the study called "principal leadership style and school performances" as seen in figure 5.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine the effects of principal leadership style on school performances based on the opinions of 426 teachers. The result revealed that democratic leadership style had a positive correlation of 0.964 on school performances positively as seen in figure 1, meaning that, DLS practice in a school will increase SP. DLS enables teachers participation in decision making, collective solving of administrative problems etc. Also, the result revealed that the autocratic leadership style had a positive correlation of 0,905 on school performances. Arguments were advanced including the fact that autocratic principals had a highly structured environment, a top-bottom system of administration which favoured school performances. So, the more autocratic a leader, the more effective he/she is. Again, the result revealed that laissez-faire leadership style had a positive correlation of 0.955 on school performances. This was due to the indicators presented to the teachers. These indicators were: teachers given full mandate to take decisions, free delegation of responsibilities etc these indicators led to the validation of this research hypothesis. Lastly, the result revealed that situational leadership style had a positive correlation of 0.979 on school performances. According to this study, the situational leadership style was considered as the best leadership style one can use in an institution or school. A model was proposed at the end of the study called "principal leadership style and school performances" as seen in figure 5.

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