Original Article

Investigating the Impact of School Headteachers' Leadership Styles on Students' Academic Achievement: A Case Study of Ngororero District, Western Province

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of school headteachers' leadership styles on students' academic achievements. Leadership in educational institutions is widely recognised as a critical factor influencing school performance and student outcomes. The research explored various leadership styles, including laissez-faire, transformational, democratic and transactional, assessing the effectiveness in enhancing academic achievement. Using a mixed-methods approach, data are collected from headteachers, DOS, and teachers in selected schools through surveys, interviews, and academic performance. Some findings reveal that transformational leadership, characterised by vision-setting, motivation, and individualised support, significantly correlates with improved academic performance. Transactional leadership, focused on rewards and punishments, shows moderate effectiveness but cannot foster long-term improvement. In contrast, laissez–faire leadership, defined by minimal involvement, is associated with lower academic outcomes. The topic emphasises that leadership styles influence teacher motivation, classroom management, and the overall learning environment, ultimately impacting student success. This topic highlights the importance of leadership development programs for headteachers, encouraging the adoption of practices that promote collaboration, innovation, and academic excellence. This topic aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators and school administrators, contributing to efforts aimed at enhancing educational quality and student performance. The topic concludes that effective leadership is the cornerstone of academic success, warranting further exploration and investment in leadership training initiatives. Armstrong (2004) considers leadership as influence, power and the legitimate authority acquired by a leader to be able to effectively transform the organisation through the direction of the human resources that are the most important organisational asset, leading to the achievement of the desired

purpose. The headteacher's leadership style is an independent variable, while academic achievement is dependent.

INTRODUCTION

Many education policies have been put in place to improve the quality of education in Rwanda among others: Rwanda Girls Education Policy (2008), Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy (2018), WDA Education policy in Rwanda (2013), Education Sector Strategic Plans (2008- 2012; 2010-2015; 2013-2018). More specifically, the 2013 Education Sector Strategic Plan identified challenges for improving the quality of education that should have been addressed by the Government of Rwanda. Such obstacles were like insufficiency of teaching and learning materials, inappropriate curricula, heavy workload for teachers, lack of motivation for teachers, school organisation, lack of pedagogical skills for teachers, absence or lack of internal and external inspection among others.

Classrooms have been built following the introduction of 9 and 12 Year Basic Education, the curriculum has been revised and changed from Knowledge-Based Curriculum (KBC) to Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), and the Ministry of Education has made teaching and learning resources available. Teachers' professional development has been strengthened by the introduction of the School-Based Mentorship Programme (SBMP) for improving the teaching methodology and language skills (MINEDUC, 2018). Likewise, secondary school headteachers have been trained on School Leadership and were awarded a Diploma in School Management and Leadership (VVOB, REB& UR, 2019).

Despite the aforementioned efforts by the Government of Rwanda to improve the quality of education and students' academic achievement by emphasising school leadership, educational stakeholders (parents, civil society and educational agencies) are still complaining about low academic achievement among secondary school students in Rwanda. Such a discrepancy between educational inputs and students' outcomes has pushed the researcher to think about investigating the impact of educational leadership on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools of Rwanda, a case study of Ngororero District, Western province.

The specific objectives: To identify prevalent leadership styles among secondary school headteachers in Ngororero District.

To examine students' academic performance across different secondary schools within Ngororero District, and to establish the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and students' academic achievement.

Leadership in educational institutions plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning processes, which directly influences students' academic performance. Among the various leadership roles in schools, the headteacher's position is particularly critical, as their leadership style sets the tone for the school's culture, teacher motivation, and student success. Effective leadership has been widely acknowledged as a key determinant in achieving educational excellence, yet the specific ways in which headteachers' leadership styles impact academic achievement remain a subject of interest for researchers and policymakers.

Headteachers employ diverse leadership styles, as we have listed in the abstract and their role and implications. Understanding the relationship between leadership styles and academic outcomes is essential for improving school effectiveness. This topic seeks to explore how leadership influences or impacts academic achievements, examining the mechanisms through which these styles affect teaching practices, classroom environments, and students' motivation. It also wants to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and school administrators, contributing to the development and overall school success. By identifying effective leadership practices. We want to support the broader goal of educational improvement and equity.

This topic, "investigating the impact of school headteachers' leadership styles on academic achievement", focuses on examining the relationship between leadership behaviours exhibited by school leaders and their influence on students 'academic performance or outcomes. Leadership styles emphasise the approach or strategy a leader adopts in managing, guiding, and

inspiring their team. In the context of education, a headteacher's leadership style is crucial as it directly affects teacher performance, school culture, resource allocation, and ultimately, students' success.

The investigation evaluates how these leadership styles contribute to abstract influence factors such as teacher morale, instructional quality, students' engagement, and academic performance metrics. By analysing these relationships, the topic aims to identify which leadership practices are most effective in achieving high academic standards. This topic is significant as it provides insights into the role of leadership in addressing challenges in education, such as improving academic outcomes, fostering a positive learning environment, and enhancing school effectiveness. It has practical implications for professional development, policymaking, and strategic planning in education systems, offering a pathway to better school management and improved achievement.

The motivation behind this topic comes from the critical role of education in shaping individuals and society. Academic success is the cornerstone of personal and professional development, and leadership in schools significantly influences the quality of education delivered to students. Understanding the dynamics of headteachers' leadership styles is essential for creating effective school environments that foster students' achievement and teacher satisfaction.

Headteachers serve as key decision-makers and role models within schools. Their leadership style determines not only the functionality of the institution but also the morale of teachers, the engagement of students, and the academic outcomes achieved. Despite this, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding which leadership styles are most conducive to improving academic performance. This knowledge gap motivates the need for empirical research to guide school leaders, policymakers, and educators toward adopting practices that yield positive results. The

growing demand for accountability and excellence in education systems worldwide highlights the importance of leadership in driving school success by identifying leadership styles. This topic aims to address challenges such as declining academic performance, teacher burnout, and student disengagement or dropout.

This topic is motivated by the goal of equipping headteachers with strategies to improve academic outcomes, foster collaboration, and create an environment of continuous learning and growth. It contributes to the broader mission of enhancing educational quality, equity, and accessibility, ensuring that schools can effectively prepare students for the challenges of the future.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Having investigated the impact of school headteachers' leadership styles on students' academic achievements, I now shape the relaxation of the paper as follows: The first segment gives a brief history of the introduction of the leadership styles. The second element is literature evaluation, which provides present literature on demanding situations and studies on the leadership styles' effect on students 'academic achievement, Literature evaluation. . The third segment is the method that offers research a good deal and pattern length. The fourth phase raises an important evaluation and dialogue on results, primarily based on research objectives. The fifth element movements past the barrage of criticisms against the above findings led the researchers to conclude that leadership styles used by some school administrators affect students' academic achievements, and balancing different leadership styles affects success, positively coverage makers and instructors should work harmoniously to cultivate appropriate teaching practices and to motivate learners and teachers. This has a look at how this turned into the case within the impact and studies of enforcing the motivation, freedom of speech and working democratically.

Theoretical Orientation

This topic is based on two theories: one relating to leadership and the one relating to employees' motivation.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which style of leadership is best suited for a particular work situation. According to this theory, no single leadership style is appropriate in all situations. Success depends upon many variables, including leadership style, qualities of followers, and situational features (Charry, 2012).

Contingency theory states that effective leadership depends on the degree of fit between a leader's qualities and leadership style and that demanded by a specific situation (Lamb, 2013). The theory is also referred to as situational, as leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational conditions or circumstances. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for different types of decision-making. For example, in a situation where the leader is expected to be the most knowledgeable and experienced member of a group, an authoritarian style of leadership might be most appropriate.

In other instances, where group members are skilled experts and expect to be treated as such, a democratic style may be more effective.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg (1919) constructed a two-dimensional paradigm factor that affects people's attitudes about their job. One set of factors relates to intrinsic aspects of the work, that is actual execution of the work or the job content. These factors are called motivators or satisfiers, which drive people to achieve aspects such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, growth and advancement, responsibility and feedback (Drafke & Kossen, 1998).

The other set of factors relates to the extrinsic aspects of the job, that is, the work environment or the context. They are known as the hygiene or maintenance factors or dissatisfiers. The hygiene factors include aspects such as salary, status, society, working conditions, policies and administrative practices, and interpersonal relationships. The motivators include a feeling of achievement, increased responsibilities, and opportunities for growth and achievement. According to Herzberg's two-factor Theory, motivators provide real motivation, and when they are inadequate, teachers are not motivated (Drafke & Kossen, 1998). On the other hand, the absence of hygiene factors can create job dissatisfaction (Grawel, 1997). This is because intrinsic motivators (satisfiers) must be provided along with extrinsic motivators (hygiene factors) for optimal teaching performance.

Herzberg's two-factor theory can be applied to good effect by school headteachers in the motivation of their staff (teaching and non-teaching). Teachers should be given opportunities to be involved in shared decision-making, professional and personal growth programmes, collegial relationships and teamwork with job enrichment opportunities.

Transformational Leadership Theory

This theory highlights the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating their followers to achieve beyond expectations. Transformational leaders set a clear vision, encourage innovation, and provide individualised support to staff, which fosters a positive school culture and enhances both teacher performance and student academic achievements.

Transactional Theory

This theory emphasises structured management practices, where leaders use rewards and punishments to ensure task completion and adherence to standards.

While effective in maintaining order and achieving short-term goals, its impact on long-term academic success and motivation may be limited.

Situational leadership theory

This theory suggests that effective leadership is contingent on the situation and the readiness of the followers. It implies that headteachers must adapt their leadership style based on the specific needs of their teachers, students, and school environment to maximise academic performance.

Instructional Leadership Model

This model focuses on the headteacher's role in guiding and supporting instructional practices, curriculum development, and classroom management. By prioritising teaching and learning, instructional leadership has a direct impact on students' outcomes.

Path-goal Theory

This theory posits that leaders can influence followers' performance by clarifying goals, removing obstacles, and providing the necessary support. Applied to education, headteachers can influence academic achievements by creating a clear vision for success and empowering teachers and students to achieve it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concepts of Leadership and Academic Achievement

Leadership

Leadership involves the use of authority, power and influence in the process of managing and administering resources at work to produce the required results, whereas supervision involves doing the job itself and showing others how to do it and checking so that the job is done well (Oyegoke, 2012). Hence, an effective supervisor explains what is to be done, who is expected to do it, how it should be done, when it is to be done and the consequences

or impact of a good job done. An effective leader sets the targets and the standards, and success or failure in doing the job is measured against the set targets and standards (Njuguna et al, 2013).

According to Gerber et al (1998), leadership is generally defined as one or other form of dominance in which the subordinates more or less have to accept the commands and control of the leader. All theories of leadership contain two important concepts: authority and power. Thus, Earley and Weindling (2004) enumerate that any analysis of leadership ought to acknowledge, at first, based on two fundamental factors, namely: the relationship between leadership, power and authority, which are discussed below:

Authority

Smith and Cronje (1992) maintain that every manager, regardless of his or her management level, is also, on occasion, a leader who ensures that subordinates work together to achieve the organisation's stated objectives. Authority has to do with the right of the manager to enforce certain actions within specific guidelines and the right to take action against those who will not cooperate to achieve certain goals. From the foregoing, it may be inferred that authority is related to leadership. In the school situation, for example, the school principal, as the executive officer of the school, is given authority by the head of education to enforce his/her authority within the school. It is therefore important to understand the difference between authority and power.

Power

Subordinates give power to a leader or manager so that the leader can influence them and exercise authority effectively, because they (leaders) ought to have some sort of power to be called leaders. In other words, power (the ability to influence the behavior of others) has nothing to do with the hierarchical position an education leader holds and is not acquired along with a title or job description

in an organization (such as a school); however, the leader has to earn it (Smith et. al., 1992).

From the above definitions of leadership, it can be deduced that leadership is concerned about goal achievement and the initiation of change through the participation of group members or followers via communication, directing, and influencing; while at the same time, successful leadership is also about the willingness of energized followers, based on the commands or control of followers through the leader's influence, power (that is, knowledge or expertise, etc.) and authority.

Leadership Styles

Researchers and academicians have elaborated on different leadership styles. Every leader in every organisation performs certain roles/tasks for the smooth operation of the organisation and improvement of organisational performance. How the leader performs these roles and directs the affairs of the organisation is referred to as his/her leadership style (Oyetunyi, 2006).

He therefore pointed out that leadership style is the way a leader leads. Some leaders are more interested in the work to be done than in the people they work with, whilst others pay more attention to their relationship with subordinates than to the job. Below are many common leadership styles.

Autocratic Leadership Style

Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership, where leaders have complete power over staff. Staff and team members have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if these are in the best interest of the team or organisation. The benefit of autocratic leadership is that it is incredibly efficient. Decisions are made quickly, and the work to implement those decisions can begin immediately. In terms of disadvantages, most staff resent being dealt with in this way.

Autocratic leadership is often best used in crises, when decisions must be made quickly and without dissent.

Bureaucratic Leadership Style

Bureaucratic leaders follow rules rigorously and ensure that their staff also follow procedures precisely. This is an appropriate leadership style for work involving serious safety risks (such as working with machinery, with toxic substances, or at dangerous heights) or where large sums of money are involved. Bureaucratic leadership is also useful in organisations where employees do routine tasks (Shaefer, 2005). The drawback of this type of leadership is that it is ineffective in teams and organisations that rely on flexibility, creativity, or innovation (Santrock, 2007).

School goals: Schools and colleges are goal-oriented (achievement-oriented), and staff members are expected to work towards achieving the aims set by school leaders.

Charismatic Leadership Style

Charismatic leadership theory describes what to expect from both leaders and followers. Charismatic leadership is a leadership style that is identifiable but may be perceived with less tangibility than other leadership styles (Bell, 2013). Often called a transformational leadership style, charismatic leaders inspire eagerness in their teams and are energetic in motivating employees to move forward. The ensuing excitement and commitment from teams are an enormous asset to productivity and goal achievement. The negative side of charismatic leadership is the amount of confidence placed in the leader rather than in employees. This can create the risk of a project or even an entire organisation collapsing if the leader leaves. Additionally, a charismatic leader may come to believe that they can do no wrong, even when others are warning him or her about the path they are on; feelings of invincibility can ruin a team or an organisation.

Democratic/Participative Leadership Style

According to Goodnight (2011), democratic leaders make the final decisions, but include team members in the decision-making process. They encourage creativity, and team members are often highly engaged in projects and decisions. There are many benefits of democratic leadership. Team members tend to have high job satisfaction and are productive because they are more involved. This style also helps develop employees' skills.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Laissez-faire leadership may be the best or the worst of leadership styles (Goodnight, 2011). Laissez-faire, this French phrase for "let it be," when applied to leadership, describes leaders who allow people to work on their own. Laissez-faire leaders abdicate responsibilities and avoid making decisions. They may give teams complete freedom to do their work and set their deadlines. Laissez-faire leaders usually allow their subordinates the power to make decisions about their work (Chaudhry & Javed, 2012).

Transactional Leadership Style

This is the leadership style in which relationships with teachers are based upon an exchange for some valued resource in the school (Bush, 2007). Thus, transactional leadership is predicated on the exchange of rewards as against performance and focuses on motivating employees by pleasing their higher–order needs. Fry (2003) and Thomas (2000) explain that transactional leadership can be seen as a contract between the leader and his or her followers. The leader gets an agreement from the followers that they will work towards the achievement of organisational goals, while the leader agrees to good working conditions and the satisfaction of the followers' needs, which thus leads to a condition of motivation.

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership assumes that the fundamental emphasis of leadership ought to be on the commitments and capacities of organisational members. Transformational leadership ensures commitment from the followers. Both leaders and followers want to achieve and become the best, and are united in the pursuit of the higher-level goals common to them. Also, both leaders and followers want to shape the school in a certain direction. The transformational approach seems to be more people-oriented (Leithwood et. al., 1999).

Academic Achievement

Different writers have defined performance in various ways. Mortimore (2002) defined performance as the achievement under test, while De Jager (2002) defined performance as the change that occurs after an individual has undergone training or a planned experience, particularly about individual behaviour, knowledge or skill. He also stated that performance relates to student achievement and success in his/her course of study.

Okemwa (2003) linked students' performance to effectiveness and described this as the ability of the individual to be productive after formal or vocational training or planned experience. Such effectiveness will be exhibited in individual behaviour, knowledge or skill. These definitions depict performance as that which can be observed after training. One important reason behind the selection of this outcome lies in the fact that course grades represent the fulfilment of certain course standards listed in syllabi and known to all enrolled students (Mortimore, 2002). The course standards include various types of assessments, such as passing examinations and writing lab reports; therefore, course grades serve as a summative evaluation of student performance (De Jager, 2002).

Academic performance has been described as the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. This scholastic standing could be explained in terms of the grades obtained in a course or groups of courses (Daniels and Schoulen, 1970). Simkins (1981) commented on this scholastic standing and argued that performance is a measure of output and that the main outputs in education are expressed in terms of learning, that is, changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals because of their experiences within the school system. Stann (1992) supported this argument and reported that performance is the level of attainment of a person in an examination, that is, how an individual can demonstrate his or her abilities in an examination.

School Leadership and Academic Achievement

The characteristics of headteachers often determine the dynamics of a school community and the academic outcomes of school policies and procedures. When a school lacks effective leadership, minimal learning takes place. School leaders, beginning with the principal, must provide strong leadership that sets the tone for the daily operations of the school community. In the absence of effective school leadership, discipline breaks down, academics falter, and a sense of organised chaos reigns. Ineffective leadership in schools disrupts the teaching and learning process, leading to inadequate coverage of the school curriculum (Eshiwani, 1984; 1993). Ineffective leadership leads to delinquent behaviour among some students and their subsequent failure in national examinations (Thomas, 1993; Njiru, 1999). Effective school principals hire teachers who are impassioned, organised and know their subject area well, who will rise to every challenge and be committed to success and excellence. They can identify emerging issues and problems and deal with them positively. They work in an environment of transparent openness; their doors are always open, take all telephone calls, address even the most difficult situations or parents and ensure there is teacher motivation and quality teaching and learning (Fullan, 1992; Hopkins et al, 1994).

Effective school principals promote increased teacher participation and leadership in the decision-making process of various aspects of the school administration. They believe in change by having a vision, which they develop with co-workers and value the organisation's personnel. School vision influences the school climate, which includes teachers' instructional behaviour as well as student outcomes.

Effective school headteachers will always value the human resources of their organisation. They provide an environment that promotes individual contributions to the organisation's work. They develop and maintain collaborative relationships formed during the development and adoption of the organisation's shared vision. They form teams, support team efforts, develop the skills groups and individuals need, and provide the necessary resources, both human and material, to fulfil the shared vision.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the systematic plan or approach used in a research study to collect, analyse, and interpret data. It explains how the research was conducted, including the research design, data collection methods, sampling procedures, and analytical techniques.

Based on the abstract provided, a well-structured Methodology section that explains the design, data collection methods, participants, and analytical approach used in the study. This version aligns with the claims in the abstract and respects the mixed-methods design (both qualitative and quantitative approaches).

Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how different leadership styles of headteachers affect students' academic achievements. The use of a mixed-methods approach allowed for the triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and depth of findings by integrating numerical data with detailed participant insights.

Population and Sampling

The target population included headteachers, Directors of Studies (**DOS**), and teachers from selected schools. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience regarding school leadership and student performance. Schools were selected based on their academic performance trends and administrative structure to ensure a diverse representation.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three main tools like surveys, interviews, and academic performance records. The quantitative data collected from surveys, where structured questionnaires were distributed to headteachers, DOS, and teachers. The surveys assessed their perceptions of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, democratic, and laissez-faire) and the observed effects on student academic outcomes. The Likert-scale format was used for consistency and ease of analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of participants to gain deeper insights into leadership practices, challenges, and the school environment. The interviews explored how leadership behaviours influence motivation, classroom management, and the learning atmosphere.

Student academic performance records were collected to provide an objective measure of achievement. These data served to validate the qualitative and survey findings by linking leadership styles to actual student outcomes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) and correlational analysis to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between leadership styles and academic achievement, while qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis helped identify recurring patterns and themes related to leadership influence on student outcomes, teacher motivation, and classroom dynamics.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was assured, and data were used strictly for academic purposes. The independent variable was the headteachers' leadership style (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, democratic) while Students' academic achievement was the dependent variable.

This research used a mixed method. The research describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon being studied and attempts to gather quantifiable information for statistical analysis of the population sample. The researcher investigated the impact of headteachers 'leadership styles on students' academic achievement. This research was

quantitative. A quantitative approach is a research method that uses numerical data and statistical analysis to understand and predict phenomena. This study employed a quantitative approach because it used numerical data to present findings.

According to Mann (2017), a descriptive statistic (in the sense of a count noun) is a summary statistic that quantitatively describes or summarises features from a collection of information. In this study, descriptive statistics were used to present the collected data in percentages so that it can be easily interpreted. The target population of this study was teachers from eight schools in Ngororero District, as mentioned above. Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. Purposive sampling method was used to select teachers who worked in eight schools from Ngororero, who provided the first-hand information and experiences were taken into consideration. The sample size of this study was 48 teachers who teach in Ngororero District in selected schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tables below present demographic information of respondents based on gender, age and qualification level.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender of Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentages (%)
Male	26	54.17
Female	22	45.83
Total	48	**100%**

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this study, gender was respected, where 54.17% are male while 45.83% are female, and this showed variation between males and females.

The data shows that out of 48 respondents, 26 respondents (54.17%) were male, and 22 respondents (45.83%) were female. This indicates that males slightly outnumbered females in the

study, with a gender difference of approximately 8.34%.

While the difference is not substantial, it suggests that there was a relatively balanced gender representation, although males were the majority group in this sample. This balance is beneficial for generalising the findings of the study across both

genders, as neither gender is overwhelmingly overrepresented.

The relatively even distribution of genders, 54.17% male and 45.83% female, provides a balanced perspective in terms of gender-related responses. While males slightly dominate the sample, the difference is marginal (just over 8%), meaning that the results can reasonably reflect opinions, behaviours, or experiences across both genders.

The data indicates a fair level of gender inclusivity, which strengthens the credibility and generalizability of the findings. It avoids the bias that may occur in highly skewed samples. Since both male and female respondents are adequately represented, the data allows for gender-

disaggregated analysis. Researchers can explore whether responses differ by gender, which may uncover important trends or patterns (e.g., differing attitudes, satisfaction levels, or needs). If the study relates to a product, service, or policy, knowing the gender distribution helps tailor strategies. For instance, if male opinions dominate the results, it might be useful to compare whether female respondents feel similarly, ensuring inclusive decision-making. Although the sample is relatively balanced, future studies might aim for exact parity (50-50) or may consider including non-binary or gender-diverse individuals if applicable. This would further enhance inclusivity and relevance in a modern research context.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age of Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentages (%)
25-31	21	43.75%
32-38	14	29.17%
39-45	9	18.75%
46 and more	4	8.33%
Total	48	100%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this study, different age was taken into consideration. 43.75% are between 25-31 year's, 29.17% are 32-38 years old, 18.75% are between 39-45, and 8.33% are above 45 years old. In this study, Young Adults Dominate the Sample. The majority of respondents fall in the 25–31 age group, accounting for 43.75% of the total sample. This suggests that the study primarily reflects the views or behaviours of younger adults, who may be in the early stages of their careers or adult life. Gradual Decrease with Age: There is a noticeable decline in representation as age increases: 32–38 years: 29.17%, 39–45 years: 18.75%, 46 and above: only 8.33%, this decreasing trend suggests that older individuals are underrepresented in the sample, which may affect how applicable the findings are to older age groups. If the study aims to understand

issues like technology usage, career development, consumer behaviour, or social media engagement, the dominance of younger age groups is likely appropriate, as these demographics are often the most active in such areas. The wide age range allows for age-based comparisons. Researchers may explore how opinions or behaviours vary between younger and older respondents, which can yield meaningful insights for age-sensitive topics such as learning preferences, health awareness, or lifestyle choices. Given the low number of older respondents (especially those aged 46+), future studies might consider deliberate sampling strategies to improve representation from all age groups, particularly if the research topic is intended to apply broadly across the adult population.

Table 3: Qualification Level of Respondents

Level of qualification	Number of respondents	Percentages (%)
Advanced diploma	9	18.75%
Bachelor's degree	39	81.25%
Total	**48**	**100%**

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this study, different levels of qualifications were taken into consideration, where 18.75% are Advanced Diploma holders and 81.25% are Bachelor's degree holders who contributed to this study.

Out of the total 48 respondents, 39 respondents (81.25%) hold a Bachelor's degree**,** and 9 respondents (18.75%) hold an Advanced Diploma**.** High Educational Attainment: The majority of respondents (over 80%) possess a Bachelor's degree, indicating a highly educated sample. This suggests that the respondents likely have a **s**trong academic background, which could influence their perspectives, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making. Only 18.75% of respondents have an Advanced Diploma. This shows that individuals with qualifications below a bachelor's level are underrepresented, which may limit the diversity of educational experiences in the sample.

Given the high proportion of degree holders. The findings may reflect views typical of more formally educated individuals, especially in areas like employment preferences, technology use, or critical thinking. Results may not be fully generalizable to populations with lower educational qualifications or vocational training backgrounds. While the sample is skewed toward bachelor's degree holders, there is still an opportunity to conduct a comparative analysis between the two groups. For example, one might examine whether qualification level influences attitudes, awareness, or behaviour patterns.

To capture a broader and more inclusive perspective, future studies may consider targeting a more balanced educational sample, including diploma holders, vocational training graduates, or even postgraduates, depending on the research objectives.

Table 4: Years of Work Experience

Interval of working experience	Number of respondents	Percentages (%)
1-5	29	60.42
6-10	11	22.92
11-15	4	8.33
16 and above	4	8.33%
Total	**48**	**100%**

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this study, different years of working experience were taken into consideration, where 60.42% are between 1-5, 22.92% are between 6-10, 8.33% are 11-15, with the same people who are experienced 16 years and above. Out of the total 48 respondents: 29 respondents (60.42%) have 1–5 years of working experience, 11 respondents (22.92%) have 6–10 years of experience, 4 respondents (8.33%) have 11–15 years of experience, 4 respondents (8.33%) have 16 years and above, the majority are early in

their careers.

The largest group, over 60% are individuals with 1–5 years of work experience.

This suggests that the sample is largely composed of early-career professionals, possibly recent graduates or young employees still building their careers. There is a clear decline in respondent numbers as work experience increases. Only 8.33% of the respondents have more than 10 years of

experience, showing that mid- to late-career professionals are underrepresented in the sample. Since the sample skews younger in terms of professional experience. The findings may mostly reflect the views, expectations, and challenges of newer employees in the workforce.

Topics like job satisfaction, workplace adaptability, or professional development may show trends that are more relevant to younger professionals. Despite the imbalance, the presence of respondents

across all experience intervals allows for basic comparative analysis (e.g., comparing job satisfaction or performance perception between early and experienced employees). For more balanced insights, future studies should consider targeted sampling of mid- and late-career professionals to ensure their perspectives are adequately captured, especially if the research deals with long-term career development, leadership, or retention.

Table 5: What Are the Common Leadership Styles Observed among Headteachers?

Statements	Agree	Percentages (%)	Disagree	Percentages (%)
Laissez-faire	9	18.75%	39	81.25%
Authoritarian	5	10.42%	43	89.52%
Democratic	30	62.50%	18	37.50 %
Transactional	3	6.25%	45	93.75%
Transformational	45	93.75%	3	6.25%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

A very high proportion of respondents (93.75%) agree that headteachers practice transformational leadership. This indicates that most headteachers are perceived as motivating, visionary, and supportive of change and innovation within schools. 62.5% of respondents believe headteachers exhibit democratic leadership, which implies that they involve staff in decision-making, encourage participation, and foster teamwork.

Laissez-faire (18.75%), Authoritarian (10.42%), and Transactional (6.25%) leadership styles are not commonly observed. These findings suggest that most headteachers do not adopt hands-off, overly

controlling, or purely reward-based leadership styles, which may not be effective in educational settings requiring collaboration and trust.

The dominance of transformational and democratic styles suggests a positive leadership environment, where headteachers are likely inspiring, inclusive, and focused on school improvement. The minimal use of authoritarian or transactional approaches reflects a shift away from rigid, top-down management toward collaborative leadership.

The low presence of laissez-faire leadership indicates that headteachers are generally engaged and proactive, avoiding neglect of their roles.

Table 6: Which Leadership Styles are Generally Associated with the Highest Academic Achievement?

Leadership styles among headteachers	Number of respondents	Percentages (%)
Authoritarian	3	6.25 %
Democratic	13	27.08%
Transactional	5	10.42%
Transformational	27	56.25%
Total	**48**	**100%**

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this table, a majority of respondents (56.25%) associate transformational leadership with the highest academic achievement. This suggests that schools led by headteachers who are inspirational, motivating, and focused on growth and development tend to achieve better academic results. Democratic Leadership Follows 27.08% of respondents identify democratic leadership as effective for academic performance. This implies that inclusive decision-making and collaborative environments also play a significant role in enhancing academic success. Other Leadership Styles are less favoured, where **Transactional leadership** (10.42%) and authoritarian leadership (6.25%) are less commonly associated with high academic achievement. These styles may be seen as less adaptable or inspiring, and possibly not supportive of long-term academic growth.

The strong preference for transformational and democratic leadership suggests that headteachers who empower staff, encourage innovation, and build strong relationships are seen as more capable of driving academic excellence.

The minimal support for authoritarian and transactional styles highlights a shift away from command-and-control or reward-punishment models in favour of more student-centred and teacher-empowering approaches.

Table 7: What Student Performance Indicators Can Be Used to Measure Academic Achievement?

Indicators	Agree	Percentages	disagree	Percentages
Standardised test scores	42	87.50%	6	12.50%
Grade point averages	35	72.92%	13	27.08%
Graduation rates	43	89.58%	5	10.42%
Student's attendance records	41	85.42%	7	14.58%
Performance in national or regional examinations	48	100%	0	0%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this table, the results show that Performance in National or Regional Examinations is universally accepted. All respondents (100%) agree that this is a key indicator of academic achievement, suggesting it is the most credible and standardised measure of student performance. Graduation Rates and Standardised Test Scores are also strong indicators. 89.58% of respondents agree that graduation rates reflect academic success. 87.5% agree on the use of standardised test scores, showing confidence in these metrics as measures of cumulative learning and school effectiveness. Student Attendance is widely recognised, 85.42% agree that attendance records correlate with academic achievement, implying that consistent presence in school is linked to better performance.

Grade Point Average (GPA) receives moderate agreement, while still a majority (72.92%), this is the least agreed-upon indicator, possibly due to variability in grading standards across schools or subjects, making GPA a less objective measure than national exams or standardised tests. The results suggest that objective, standardised, and externally validated measures (like national exams and graduation rates) are viewed as more reliable indicators of student academic success. While GPA and attendance are still valuable, they may be seen as supplementary indicators that provide context rather than definitive proof of academic achievement. Schools and policymakers can use this insight to prioritise certain indicators when evaluating student outcomes, allocating resources, or designing interventions.

Table 8: What Role Do Teachers Play in Mediating the Relationship between Headteacher's Leadership and Student's Achievement?

Indicators	Agree	Percentages	Disagree	Percentages	Neutral	Percentages
Effective leadership can boost teacher morale.	42	87.50%	6	12.50%	0	0%
Job satisfaction	46	95.84%	1	2.08%	1	2.08%
Instructional quality, which enhances student learning and academic outcomes	47	97.92%	0	0%	1	2.08%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

This data highlights respondents' perceptions of how teachers act as intermediaries between the leadership practices of headteachers and student academic outcomes.

Teachers Are Key Mediators of Leadership Impact: An overwhelming majority of respondents recognise that teachers play a crucial role in linking leadership to student achievement. This is especially evident in the 97.92% agreement on the role of teachers in ensuring high instructional quality, which directly enhances student learning and outcomes.

Leadership strongly influences teacher morale and satisfaction. 87.5% agree that effective leadership boosts teacher morale, suggesting that positive leadership practices (e.g., support, recognition, involvement) make teachers more motivated and committed.

95.84% agree that leadership contributes to job satisfaction, implying that when teachers are satisfied, they are more likely to perform well, ultimately benefiting students.

Minimal disagreement and neutrality: Very few respondents expressed disagreement or neutrality, indicating strong consensus across the board on the importance of teachers as key channels through which leadership practices affect academic outcomes.

These findings reinforce the idea that teachers are not passive recipients of leadership but active agents who mediate and implement leadership visions in classrooms.

Headteachers who aim to improve academic achievement must focus on empowering and supporting teachers, as their morale, satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness directly affect student success.

Policymakers and school administrators should prioritise teacher development, motivation, and engagement as part of leadership strategies to enhance academic performance.

Table 9: Are There Any External Factors That Might Influence the Relationship between Leadership Style and Academic Achievement?

External factors	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage	Neutral	percentage
Socio-economic status of students	44	91.67%	1	2.08%	3	6.25%
Government education policies	45	93.75%	0	0%	3	6.25%
Parental involvement	47	97.92%	1	2.08%	0	0%
School funding	45	93.75%	3	6.25%	0	0%
Community support	47	97.92%	1	2.08%	0	0%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

This data reflects respondents' views on various external factors that may influence how leadership style affects academic outcomes. Strong agreement on multiple external influences: A vast majority of respondents agree that external factors play a significant role in shaping the relationship between leadership styles and academic achievement. Parental involvement and community support lead. 97.92% agree that both parental involvement and community support are critical external factors. This highlights the importance of a supportive home and community environment in reinforcing the positive effects of leadership on student outcomes. Socio-economic status, government policies, and funding are also critical. Over 90% agree that students' socio-economic status, government education policies, and school funding significantly affect academic achievement. These factors can either facilitate or constrain the effectiveness of leadership styles in improving student performance. Very few respondents disagree, indicating a strong consensus that leadership does not operate in isolation; it is influenced by wider contextual factors. The effectiveness of headteacher leadership on academic achievement depends on multiple external conditions. School leaders and policymakers need to consider these factors when designing strategies to improve student outcomes. Strengthening parental involvement, ensuring adequate funding, fostering community engagement, and addressing socio-economic challenges are essential for maximising the impact of leadership on education.

Table 10: How Can Schools Improve Leadership Practices to Support Student Achievement?

Indicators	Respondents	Percentage
Offer professional development for the headteacher.	39/48	81.25
Promotes collaborative decision making	47/48	97.92
Encourage data-driven leadership.	41/48	85.42
Provide mentoring and peer learning opportunities for school leaders.	44/48	91.67

Source: *Primary, 2025*

This data reflects respondents' views on strategies that schools can adopt to enhance leadership effectiveness and ultimately improve student outcomes.

Collaborative Decision-Making is most favoured. Nearly all respondents (97.92%) agree that promoting collaborative decision-making is vital for improving leadership practices.

This suggests that involving teachers and staff in leadership decisions creates a more inclusive and effective school environment. 91.67% support providing mentoring and peer learning opportunities for school leaders. This emphasises

the importance of continuous learning and support among headteachers to enhance their leadership skills.

A significant majority (81.25%) believe that offering professional development programs for headteachers is essential. Ongoing training equips leaders with updated knowledge, skills, and best practices. 85.42% of respondents favour encouraging data-driven leadership, which involves using student performance data and other evidence to inform decisions. This approach helps leaders make informed, strategic choices to improve academic outcomes. Schools aiming to boost student achievement should invest in leadership development through training, mentoring, and collaborative practices. Encouraging a culture of shared decision-making and evidence-based leadership can foster more responsive and effective school management.

These strategies collectively help build leadership capacity that supports teacher performance and student success.

Table 11: Among Different Styles of Leadership, Which One Do You Suggest to Be the Best?

Leadership styles	respondents	Percentages
Laissez-faire	2	4.17%
Authoritarian	4	8.33%
Democratic	10	20.84%
Transactional	4	8.33%
Transformational	28	58.33%
Total	**48**	**100%**

Source: *Primary, 2025*

From this table, the results show that Transformational Leadership is the most preferred style, where the majority of respondents (58.33%) recommend transformational leadership as the best style. This style is characterised by inspiring and motivating followers, fostering innovation, and focusing on growth and development. 20.84% of respondents prefer the democratic style, which emphasises collaboration, participation, and shared decision-making. Laissez-faire (4.17%), authoritarian (8.33%), and transactional (8.33%) styles receive minimal support. These styles are generally viewed as less effective in creating a positive school environment or driving academic success.

Transformational leadership is suggested as the best style for headteachers due to its emphasis on vision, motivation, and empowering others, which are essential for fostering high academic achievement and a positive school culture. Additionally, elements of democratic leadership can complement transformational leadership by encouraging teacher participation and collaborative decision-making. Headteachers should therefore aim to adopt a transformational style while fostering inclusivity and collaboration to achieve the best educational outcomes.

Table 12: What Do You Prefer to Be the Best Characteristics of Transformational Leadership Styles?

Characteristics	Respondents	Percentage
Intellectual stimulation	38	79.17 %
Modelling integrity and high expectations	41	85.42%
Individualized consideration	45	93.75%
Inspirational motivational	46	95.83%
Vision thinking	36	75%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

In this table, the highest percentage (95.83%) of respondents identify inspirational motivation as the best characteristic of transformational leadership.

This highlights the importance of leaders who can energise and encourage staff towards achieving common goals. 93.75% emphasise the need for leaders to provide personalised support and attention to staff members, recognising their unique needs and fostering growth. A strong majority (85.42%) value leaders who demonstrate integrity and maintain high standards, serving as role models for ethical behaviour and excellence.

While slightly lower, 79.17% and 75% agree that challenging assumptions and encouraging innovation (intellectual stimulation), along with having a clear vision for the future, are important traits. Effective transformational leaders are those who not only inspire and motivate but also attend to individual needs, uphold strong ethical standards, and encourage creative thinking. Schools seeking to develop transformational leadership should emphasise these characteristics in their leadership training and development programs.

Table 13: What Are the Best Advantages of Transformational Leadership in Schools for Improving Academic Achievement?

Advantages	Respondents	Percentages
Increased teacher morale and retention	43	89.58%
Positive school climate	46	95.83%
Higher student engagement	46	95.83%
Professional development culture	44	91.67%
Encourage innovation to strengthen relationships	39	81.25%

Source: *Primary, 2025*

The highest-rated advantages, each cited by 95.83% of respondents, are: Creating a positive school climate and increasing student engagement. This highlights how transformational leadership fosters an environment where both teachers and students feel supported, motivated, and actively involved in the learning process. 91.67% agree that transformational leadership builds a professional development culture, promoting continuous learning among staff. 89.58% also see it as key to boosting teacher morale and retention, suggesting that such leadership helps retain skilled educators by making them feel valued and motivated.

While slightly lower, 81.25% still acknowledge that transformational leadership encourages innovation and strengthens interpersonal relationships, both critical for collaboration and sustained school improvement. Transformational leadership is strongly linked with enhanced academic performance through empowered and satisfied teachers, engaged students, a culture of growth, trust, and innovation. By promoting a visionary, supportive, and inclusive environment, transformational leaders help ensure long-term improvements in both teaching quality and student outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The transformational leadership emerges as the most effective style, creating an inclusive and motivating environment conducive to high academic performance. Its focus on collaboration and support ensures sustained improvement.

Transactional leadership style is effective in maintaining order and achieving short-term goals, but its limited emphasis on innovation and empowerment restricts its impact on long-term academic growth. The laissez-faire leadership style emphasises the consequences of inadequate engagement and its adverse effects on academic outcomes. The topic advocates for a shift towards leadership development programs tailored to promote transformational practices. Policymakers and educators are encouraged to invest in training

initiatives that equip headteachers with the skills needed to inspire and lead effectively. Education ministries and school boards should invest in leadership development programs that emphasise transformational leadership principles, including vision setting, team building, and innovation. Headteachers should be discouraged from adopting laissez-faire approaches. Regular performance reviews and leadership accountability frameworks should be implemented. School heads should involve teachers and staff in planning and decision-making. A shared vision leads to better implementation of school policies and a stronger sense of community. Evaluation of school performance should include assessments of leadership effectiveness based on staff feedback, student performance data, and school climate surveys. Leadership development should be tailored to the specific challenges of each school (e.g., rural and urban) to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Headteachers should prioritise ongoing teacher training and create a culture of continuous improvement to maintain high instructional standards. Encourage school leaders to use academic performance data to guide interventions, allocate resources, and support student-centred strategies.

Summary

This study investigates the impact of school headteachers' leadership styles on academic achievements. Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the educational environment, influencing teachers' performance, students' engagement, and overall school effectiveness. We discussed types of leadership like transformational, transactional, laissez-faire and so on, evaluating their effects on academic performance. The topic highlights that leadership styles directly affect teacher morale, instructional quality and student success, making effective leadership crucial for achieving educational excellence. It underscores the need for professional development programs for headteachers to adopt leadership practices that positively influence academic achievements. Transformational Leadership Positively Impacts Academic Achievement Headteachers who adopted transformational leadership styles characterised by vision, motivation, individual support, and innovation significantly influenced student performance. Schools with such leaders showed higher levels of academic engagement and improved student outcomes. Transactional leadership, which emphasises reward and punishment, had a moderate impact. It maintained discipline and structure but did not significantly motivate students or teachers toward higher achievement beyond compliance. While Schools where headteachers demonstrated laissez-faire leadership, low involvement and lack of direction tended to perform poorly. This leadership style was linked to low teacher morale and disorganised school environments. Leadership styles that encouraged professional development, collaboration, and recognition of teacher efforts indirectly enhanced student performance by boosting teacher morale and instructional quality. The effectiveness of a leadership style was influenced by school location (urban and rural), student socioeconomic background, and availability of resources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to investigate the impact of school headteachers' leadership styles on students' academic achievement. By examining various leadership approaches and their outcomes, the research provides meaningful insights into how leadership influences school success. This chapter presents the summary of key findings, draws conclusions based on these findings, and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and stakeholders. The study found a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership styles and improved student academic achievement. Transactional leadership had moderate success in maintaining structure but was less effective in inspiring high

performance. Laissez-faire leadership correlated with poor student performance and low teacher morale. The leadership style of the headteacher significantly influenced the school climate, teacher motivation, and instructional quality. Contextual factors such as school location and resource availability influenced the effectiveness of leadership styles. Effective leadership in schools is a crucial determinant of students' academic performance. This study concludes that transformational leadership, which emphasises vision, collaboration, and support, is the most effective in enhancing student outcomes. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership is detrimental to school progress. Leadership is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and its success is often shaped by the context in which it is applied. The results of this study reinforce the need for robust leadership training, the promotion of best practices, and systems of accountability. With strategic investment in leadership development, schools can significantly enhance student academic achievement and overall educational quality.

Recommendations

Transformational leadership is suggested as the best style for headteachers due to its emphasis on vision, motivation, and empowering others, which are essential for fostering high academic achievement and a positive school culture. Additionally, elements of democratic leadership can complement transformational leadership by encouraging teacher participation and collaborative decision-making. Headteachers should therefore aim to adopt a transformational style while fostering inclusivity and collaboration to achieve the best educational outcomes. Establish platforms where effective school leaders can mentor less experienced headteachers. Peer support networks can help spread best practices and reinforce accountability. Education departments should introduce tools for tracking and measuring leadership effectiveness, including feedback from students, parents, and teaching staff. Headteachers should adopt inclusive

leadership strategies that recognise diversity among students and staff. Culturally responsive leadership has been shown to positively impact student engagement and achievement.

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

Invest in transformational leadership training for school heads. Limit laissez-faire leadership practices through oversight and accountability. Encourage shared decision-making between headteachers and staff. Include leadership effectiveness in school performance metrics. Tailor leadership development to specific school contexts. Foster professional development and teacher motivation. Use academic data to inform school leadership decisions. Establish mentorship programs for headteachers. Introduce tools to monitor and evaluate leadership performance. Promote inclusive leadership that reflects the diversity of the student body.

Future Studies Could Explore:

The impact of gender or age of headteachers on leadership style effectiveness. Longitudinal studies tracking student performance under different leadership transitions. The role of student and parent feedback in assessing leadership performance. Comparative studies between public and private schools regarding leadership and academic achievement.

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