Significance of Educational Leadership Styles on Pupils Academic Achievement in Primary Public Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract:- The study investigated the significance of educational leadership styles towards academic achievement in primary public schools in Morogoro Municipality. A convergent research design was employed. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study targeted teachers and heads of schools, with simple random sampling used for teachers and purposive sampling for heads of schools, resulting in a sample size of 77 respondents. Data were gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic coding for qualitative data, aligning with the study's research objectives. The study found that, effective leadership styles significantly impact academic performance in primary public schools. Visionary, supportive, and collaborative approaches, coupled with clear communication, create a positive school culture, motivate students, and improve teacher-student interactions, thereby enhancing academic success. The study recommended that school leaders adopt these styles, prioritize vision and support, and foster collaboration to boost educational outcomes. Providing professional development for leaders and encouraging a culture of continuous feedback will further align leadership practices with the needs of the school community, ultimately supporting student success and driving academic excellence.

Keywords:- Leadership Styles, Academic Achievement and Primary Public Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex and multifaceted process involving the art of inspiring, motivating, and guiding individuals toward a shared vision and successful outcomes (Fischer et al. 2017). Effective leaders are pivotal in fostering an environment of happiness, unity, and prosperity within organizations, including educational institutions (Huda et al., 2020). For schools, the role of leadership is crucial for setting clear goals, inspiring success, and achieving quality results through both managerial and leadership behaviors (Grimes et al., 2023).

Leadership styles, which refer to the diverse approaches and behaviors used to influence and guide others, significantly impact organizational dynamics and outcomes. The seminal research by Lewin, who identified democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire styles, laid the groundwork for understanding how different leadership approaches affect organizational performance (Carlin, 2019). Over time, research has expanded to include various leadership styles, each with its own implications for effectiveness in different contexts.

In the realm of education, academic performance measured by grades, test scores, and overall student understanding is a critical indicator of student success (Chen, 2021). Research has consistently shown that leadership styles in schools influence academic outcomes. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the leadership styles of head teachers have been linked to variations in student performance (Nicholls, 2018). In the USA, similar patterns have been observed, with head teachers' leadership styles playing a significant role in academic achievements (Eisner, 2017; Halling, 2018).

In East Africa, particularly Kenya, head teachers' leadership styles are recognized as crucial factors in the success of educational institutions (Irungu, 2020). Kenyan studies highlight that effective school leadership is essential for improving examination results and overall student performance (Mulongo & Jemutai, 2024; Chirambo, 2024).

In Tanzania, the government has implemented various reforms to improve educational management and performance, including the Civil Service Reform Program and the Open Performance Appraisal and Review System (OPRAS) (Shuma et al., 2024). Despite these efforts, public primary schools in Tanzania, including those in Morogoro Municipality, continue to struggle with low performance. Initiatives like the establishment of the Agency for Development of Education Management (ADEM) emphasize the importance of effective leadership in enhancing educational outcomes (Rutemelwa et al., 2023; ADEM, 2019).

Given the critical role of educational leadership in shaping academic achievement, this study aims to investigate the significance of different leadership styles on student performance in primary public schools in Morogoro Municipality. Despite existing policies and interventions, there is a notable lack of research on how various leadership

styles affect academic outcomes in this region. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights into how leadership practices can be optimized to improve educational achievements in primary schools.

➤ *Research Objective*

The study aims in investigating the significance of educational leadership styles towards academic achievement in primary public schools in Morogoro Municipality.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This study was guided by path-goal leadership theory. This theory developed by Robert House (1971), emphasizes the leader's role in clarifying the path to help followers achieve their goals and make the journey easier by providing necessary support and guidance (Northouse, 2021). According to House (1971), the theory posits that leaders can enhance follower motivation and satisfaction by adopting specific leadership behaviors that align with the characteristics of the task and the environment. Leaders achieve this by adapting their leadership style based on the situational factors and the needs of their followers (Northouse, 2021).

House and Mitchell (1974) expanded on the theory by identifying four leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (Northouse, 2021). These styles are employed based on the task requirements, follower capabilities, and environmental conditions to maximize follower performance and satisfaction. The theory's strength lies in its flexibility and emphasis on adapting leadership styles to fit the needs of different situations and followers (Northouse, 2021). By offering directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented behaviors, leaders can enhance follower motivation and satisfaction (House & Mitchell, 1974). This adaptability makes the theory applicable across various organizational contexts, where leaders must navigate diverse challenges and follower capabilities.

However, Path-Goal Theory has faced criticism for its complexity in practical application and the challenge of consistently aligning leadership behaviors with the dynamic demands of tasks and environments (Northouse, 2021). Critics argue that the theory's effectiveness may vary based on the leader's ability to accurately assess situational factors and appropriately adjust their leadership style. Moreover, the theory's focus on task-oriented and directive behaviors may overlook the importance of relational aspects of leadership, such as building trust and fostering genuine follower engagement.

In the context of a study on the significance of educational leadership styles in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Path-Goal Leadership Theory offers valuable insights. By examining how leaders clarify paths, provide support, and adjust their behaviors to align with educational goals and student needs, the theory can help assess how different leadership styles such as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented affect academic achievement. Understanding which leadership styles are most effective in motivating teachers and enhancing student engagement and performance can inform strategies to improve educational outcomes in Morogoro Municipality's public primary schools. This study could highlight the relevance of adaptive leadership approaches that foster a supportive and goal-oriented environment conducive to academic success.

II. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Qiuyan (2022) evaluated the impact of principals' leadership styles on school improvement and students' academic performance in government secondary schools in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. The study employed a descriptive survey method, collecting data through questionnaires that were developed and pilot-tested by the researchers. The analysis included reviewing school inspection reports from various zones, assessing the schools' performance against standards set by the Federal Ministry of Education, and examining students' academic results from the National Education Assessment and Examination Agency over three years (2017-2019). The study utilized clustering, stratified, and purposive sampling techniques to select 6 out of 20 zones in Oromia, 80 out of 307 secondary schools, 160 out of 240 principals, and all 320 teachers. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and independent samples t-tests. The findings indicated that while transformational, instructional, and transactional leadership styles were implemented above average, 86.3% of the schools still fell below expected standards, and students' academic performance declined over the three years. This suggests that the effectiveness of the principals' leadership styles in transforming schools and improving academic outcomes was not at the expected level, necessitating greater effort and commitment from principals to address these issues.

Maqbool et al. (2023) examined the importance of various leadership styles in maintaining academic excellence at the secondary school level. The study employed a quantitative research method, collecting data through a scale measuring diverse leadership styles (strategic, cultural, instructional) from 103 secondary schools in Punjab, Pakistan. The sample included 540 current teachers. The study formulated and tested two hypotheses using mean analysis to rank leadership styles and Pearson correlation to assess the relationship between each leadership style and overall academic excellence. The results showed that teachers predominantly favored strategic leadership, followed by instructional and cultural leadership, in sustaining academic excellence. Additionally, the findings revealed a statistically strong positive relationship between the various leadership styles and maintaining academic excellence ($r = 0.752$). The study concluded that increasing the use of strategic, instructional, and cultural leadership styles could enhance and sustain academic excellence.

Ferdinandi and Kiwonde (2023) explored the influence of educational leadership on students' academic performance in secondary schools. The study employed a descriptive research design to deeply analyze this influence. The sample

included 109 respondents, consisting of Heads of Schools (HoSs), Academic Masters, Discipline Masters, and Ward Educational Officers (WEO). The researchers used simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select 52 respondents. Data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed using MS Word and MS Excel, with results presented in tables. The Chi-square test and T-test were used to examine the relationship between leadership styles and academic performance. The findings showed that democratic leadership styles had the most significant positive influence on students' academic performance (R-value=0.932, p = 0.004). In contrast, the laissez-faire leadership style had an insignificant negative influence, with a very weak relationship (R-value = 0.1, p = 0.072). The autocratic leadership style showed a moderate relationship (R-value = 0.546), but it was not significant (p-value = 0.08). The results suggest that democratic leadership is preferred by most school leaders.

III. METHODOLOGY

A convergent research design was adopted. This design enables the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby offering a well-rounded understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This mixed research approach effectively integrates numerical data with detailed narrative insights. The target population comprised teachers and school heads. Simple random sampling was utilized in selection of teachers as to ensure an unbiased representation, while purposive sampling was employed for school heads as to capture their specific expertise and insights (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample size consisted of 77 respondents was used. Data were gathered using a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to interpret quantitative data, while thematic coding was applied to qualitative data.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding the impact of educational leadership styles on academic performance in primary public schools is crucial for fostering effective learning environments. Leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping school culture, teacher-student interactions, and overall educational outcomes. Table 1 aims to uncover insights into the significance of educational leadership on academic performance.

Table 1 Significance of Educational Leadership on Academic Performance (n = 70)

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	
My school's leadership style affects how well I do in school.	1	1.4	0	0	6	8.6	31	44.3	32	45.7	4.33
Some leadership styles help us do better in school than others.	0	0	4	5.7	11	15.7	29	41.4	26	37.1	4.10
I see a link between certain leadership styles and how well students do academically.	1	1.4	3	4.3	12	17.1	30	42.9	24	34.3	4.04
The way our leaders lead makes us want to work harder in school.	2	2.9	4	5.7	6	8.6	28	40.0	30	42.9	4.14
Our leaders' style shapes how successful our school is academically.	1	1.4	1	1.4	6	8.6	31	44.3	31	44.3	4.29
Good leadership makes teachers and students work better together, improving academics.	0	0	3	4.3	10	14.3	33	47.1	24	34.3	4.11
Teachers who understand leadership help us learn better.	0	0	1	1.4	8	11.4	23	32.9	38	54.3	4.40
When our head of schools collaborate and communicate well, we do better in school.	0	0	2	2.9	9	12.9	36	51.4	23	32.9	4.14
Our leaders encourage us to always strive for improvement and do our best.	2	2.9	3	4.3	16	22.9	28	40.0	21	30.0	3.90
Our leaders lead affects how much we participate and engage in school activities.	2	2.9	3	4.3	7	10.0	41	58.6	17	24.3	3.97

Key: f = Frequency % = Percentage
Source: Field Data (2024)

The majority (90%) of respondents believe that their school's leadership style significantly impacts their academic performance. This strong consensus aligns with a study by Radhwan (2020) which highlights the direct influence that effective leadership can have on students' success. One head of school noted, "*Our leadership style directly correlates with student achievement. When we lead with vision and support, our students thrive.*" (HoD1, Personal Communication, May

11, 2024). This finding suggests that our leadership style has a direct impact on student achievement; when we provide visionary leadership and strong support, our students thrive and succeed academically.

A substantial number of respondents (78.5%), indicate that certain leadership styles are more effective in enhancing academic performance than others. This recognition underscores the importance of adopting leadership styles that are tailored to the needs of the school and its students. Previous studies by Booth (2023) have shown that leadership styles emphasizing collaboration, clear communication, and student-centered approaches tend to yield better academic outcomes. A head of school explained, "*Leadership styles that emphasize collaboration and clear communication are vital for academic success.*" (HoD2, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). This finding suggests that leadership styles emphasizing collaboration and clear communication are essential for achieving academic success.

A significant proportion of respondents (77.2%) acknowledge a clear link between specific leadership styles and students' academic performance. This strong agreement suggests that leadership behaviors such as setting expectations and creating a positive school culture can directly influence academic outcomes (Atasoy, 2020). One head teacher remarked, "*Our leadership approach fosters a supportive and motivating environment, which is crucial for student achievement.*" (HoD5, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024). This finding indicates that our leadership approach cultivates a supportive and motivating environment, which plays a crucial role in facilitating student achievement.

The majority (82.9%), of respondents, specified that the leadership style of their head of schools motivates them to work harder. This consensus highlights the role of inspirational and motivating leadership in fostering a strong work ethic among students. Previous research by Rodrigues and Ávila de Lima (2024) indicated that leaders who lead by example and recognize efforts can significantly enhance student motivation and academic performance. A head of school shared, "*When leaders lead by example and recognize efforts, students are motivated to work harder and achieve more.*" (HoD1, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). This finding suggests that when leaders lead by example and acknowledge efforts, it motivates students to exert more effort and attain higher levels of achievement.

A large number (88.6%) of respondents believe that the leadership style of their head of schools significantly shapes the school's academic success. This strong agreement underscores the critical role that leadership plays in setting the vision, goals, and standards for academic excellence (Radhwan, 2020). One head of school stated, "*Effective leadership that promotes high expectations and provides necessary support is essential for academic excellence.*" (HoD4, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024). This finding highlights that effective leadership, which sets high expectations and offers adequate support, is crucial for achieving academic excellence.

The majority (81.4%) of respondents recognize that good leadership fosters better collaboration between teachers and students, leading to improved academic outcomes. This consensus emphasizes the importance of leadership in creating a cohesive and collaborative school environment. A head of school commented, "*Leaders who facilitate teamwork and open communication contribute significantly to a positive learning atmosphere.*" (HoD5, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024). This finding suggests that leaders who promote teamwork and open communication play a crucial role in creating a positive learning environment.

A significant number (87.2%), of respondents, feel that teachers who understand leadership contribute to better learning outcomes. This strong agreement suggests that teachers who exhibit leadership qualities can positively influence students' learning experiences. This finding aligns with Path-Goal Leadership Theory which emphasizes providing direction, support, and motivation to achieve academic goals. One teacher noted, "*Teachers who lead effectively create engaging and supportive classrooms that promote active learning.*" (HoD1, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). This finding suggests that teachers who demonstrate effective leadership skills foster engaging and supportive classroom environments that encourage active learning among students.

The majority (84.3%) of respondents believe that effective collaboration and communication among head of schools' lead to better academic performance. This consensus highlights the importance of a unified and well-coordinated leadership team in driving school success. These finding aligns with Contingency theory by emphasizing the adaptation of leadership approaches to fit the specific needs and circumstances of the school environment, ensuring effective management and achievement of educational goals. A head of school emphasized, "*When head of schools collaborate effectively, they can implement cohesive strategies that support student achievement.*" (HoD2, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). This finding indicates that effective collaboration among school leaders enables the implementation of cohesive strategies that enhance student achievement.

A considerable number (70%) of respondents feel encouraged by their leaders to strive for improvement and do their best. This agreement suggests that motivational and supportive leadership is crucial for fostering a growth mindset among students. This finding aligns with Path-Goal Leadership Theory, which emphasizes guiding and supporting individuals to achieve their goals through encouragement and clarity. A head teacher remarked, "*Our leaders encourage us to aim higher and provide the necessary support, inspiring students to reach their full potential.*" (HoD7, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024). This finding suggests that our leaders motivate us to set ambitious goals and provide essential support, thereby inspiring students to achieve their maximum capabilities.

A significant proportion of respondents (82.9%) recognize that their leaders' leadership style influences their

participation and engagement in school activities. This consensus highlights the impact of leadership on students' overall school experience. This finding aligns with Contingency theory by emphasizing that effective leadership adapts to various student needs and situations to optimize educational outcomes. One head of school shared, "*Active engagement from leaders in promoting extracurricular activities enhances student involvement and academic performance.*" (HoD3, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). This finding underscores that proactive leadership in promoting extracurricular activities correlates with heightened student engagement and potentially improved academic performance.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective leadership styles play a crucial role in influencing academic performance in primary public schools. Leadership approaches that are visionary, supportive, and emphasize collaboration and clear communication are particularly impactful. These styles foster a positive school culture, motivate students, and enhance teacher-student interactions, ultimately driving academic success. Adopting such leadership practices is essential for creating an environment that supports both student achievement and overall school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the study recommended that school leaders prioritize adopting leadership styles that emphasize vision, support, and effective communication to enhance academic performance. Implementing strategies that foster collaboration among teachers and create a positive, motivating environment for students can significantly improve educational outcomes. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities for leaders to refine their skills in these areas and encouraging a culture of continuous feedback and adaptation will help in aligning leadership practices with the needs of the school community. By focusing on these recommendations, schools can better support student success and drive overall academic excellence.

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