

ISRG Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature (ISRGJEHL)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit
ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)
Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/>
Volume – I Issue- VI (November-December) 2024
Frequency: Bimonthly



The Impact of Leadership Styles in Junior Secondary Schools in The Western Area Rural District, Sierra Leone.

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| **Received:** 20.11.2024 | **Accepted:** 25.11.2024 | **Published:** 27.11.2024

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Abstract

This study was about the impact of leadership styles in junior secondary schools in the western area rural district of Sierra Leone. The study was led by three research objectives which were to; assess the Leadership Styles of School Administrators. Examine the Working Relationship between Teachers and School Administrators. Determine the Impact of Leadership Styles on School Administrators

The research involved five schools, 35 teachers, and 15 principals, selected through simple random sampling. Data collection was done through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that leadership styles in these schools face challenges such as poor working conditions and low remuneration, leading to poor results and high teacher turnover. Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with the leadership of their unions, who do little to negotiate with the government to improve working conditions. A large proportion of teachers reported that situational leadership style is mostly used by school administrators, and there is a good working relationship with school administrators. Most teachers are motivated by the leadership styles of their school administrators. The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Council of Principals of FSecondary Schools organize in-service training for school administrators to increase teacher commitment. Additionally, school administrators should work to improve the effectiveness of their leadership styles, as not all teachers are satisfied with their leadership styles.

Keywords: Impact, Leadership Styles, Junior Secondary Schools, Western Area Rural District, Sierra Leone

INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a very important role in any organization or society because leadership belongs to the individual characteristics and a strong relationship between a leader and supporter as well. Silva, Y. (2023). Leadership in any organization cannot be linked to just one person; fundamentally it is the collection of different reasons. Day, C., Sammons, P., & Gorgen, K. (2020) recommends that leadership impact on the overall school environment this includes the leadership roles of both teachers and principal. Basically effects of leadership are the educational climate of school, inspirational elements educators and the impact of staff development on teacher education Haq, A., & Rauf, M. (2022).

Leadership plays a vital role in every organization. The style of the leader is also important to the organization/institutional operations. The careers of education leaders are gradually improving. Educators have a better consideration of how education of the leaders plays a vital role in students' achievement. The main focus of educational leadership is to achieve students through development, challenges, care and supportive environmental conditions conducive to student learning. Educational leadership functions can help guide the key description, responsibilities, of skilled education leaders Danbaba, A. S., & Panshak, T. N. (2021). The main function of the leadership is to support, evaluate and develop the quality of teachers. Under the power of effective leadership skills, persons are able to direct and control effectively the functioning of institutions Day, C., Sammons, P., & Gorgen, K. (2020). Educational leaders must have sufficient capacity to adjust the instructional program to the local requirements of the teacher. Leaders must take steps to endorse teamwork among teachers and participate in teacher supervision, assessment and skills' growth. Teachers should be effectively trained to understand how to meet the needs of the students. Therefore, an important goal of educational leaders is to support, assess and improve the quality of teachers Kapur, R. (2018).

In Sierra Leone, the number of students is increasing every year. However, despite the rapid growth in the number of school admissions, it has been concluded by Samonova, E., et al (2021) that the expansion of schools alone may not contribute fully to individuals' and society's development. The rapid expansion of schools could, in fact, have an adverse effect on the quality of education and the effectiveness of leadership. More specifically, it could have a serious impact on the competency of leaders and teachers in a nation such as Sierra Leone. A study by Wachira, F. M., et al (2017) reveals that a principal can promote or destroy a school through the leadership style he/she adopts. Furthermore, they observe that the school mirrors the principal's personality in various ways. In addition, Aruzie, R. S., & Adjei, A. (2019) argues that many teachers at secondary schools still perform poorly due to poor leadership.

As a result of the constitutional leadership roles of principals, workers expect them to work in a particular way. Principals understand themselves as executing their leadership roles in terms of what is expected of them. However, the leadership styles of principals expected by teachers may be different from the actual leadership styles they experience from their leaders. Therefore, most of the time workers might not be satisfied with their educational leaders and the entire school system if their expectations are not met Leo, U., et al(2020).It is with this in mind that the researcher wonders how a leadership style can affect teacher performance.

Most heads of schools and teachers lack professional leadership. According to published by the Concord Times Newspaper (2018) it is stated that the education system in Sierra Leone is managed at most levels by professional educational administrators who prefer their classroom teaching experience, coupled with trial and error in execution of their duties. Consequently, there are serious deficiencies in management of educational institutions. Furthermore, Victor, A. A. (2017) points out that a well-managed school has adequate supply of staff of facilities by school heads. He further noted that teachers are organised in such a way that each staff is assigned duties and provided with necessary facilities to enable them to perform the assigned duties effectively. In addition, an effective leadership involves the ability to leave without ambiguities created by such compromises and incorporates them at the level of policy formulation and implementation.

Leadership styles are relevant utilities of management which helps to maximize efficiency and achieve organisational goals Amanchukwu, et al . (2015). Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. (2017) opines that a leader is one that engages in crafting strategies, adjusting the strategy and getting others to implement it. He further reiterates that managing employees in organisations is largely dependent on the quality of leadership.

Paais, M., & Pattiruhu, J. R. (2020) indicated that leadership incorporates accomplishment of tasks, which include organisational requirement and satisfaction of employees as a human resource requirement. It is then argued that without a proper leadership style, effective performance would not be realized in school, Aruzie, R. S., & Adjei, A. (2019).A well-functioning school with good leadership should be observed in schools by means of indicators. According to Kibalama, D. (2018). indicators of well teacher performance school include good students' academic performance; positive students' discipline; satisfied as well as motivated staff and students; good interpersonal relations at work place; high staff as well as students 'morale and high work high output. Therefore, schools which lack these indicators would be characterised by poor students' academic performance; dissatisfied as well as unmotivated staff; stressed interpersonal relations; low morale for staff and students and low output. Simba, N. O., et al (2016). maintained that people talk about other factors that cause failure. The factors include indiscipline, lack of administrative controls, inappropriate teaching facilities and materials.

According to Maqbool, S., et al (2024) there are different leadership styles - autocratic, democratic, instructional and laissez-faire. The achievements in school are dependent to the four identified leadership styles. Autocratic leadership appears generally self-centred and allowing minimum participation of the teacher in decision making, the democratic leadership style is rather teacher oriented and it's the only one that has direct and significant affiliation with the teachers' performance in United States. According to Andriani, S., et al (2018) instructional and transformational leadership style encourages focus on improving teacher's performance as the direction for the school. Transformational leadership on the other hands draws attention to a broader to teachers' performance. However, performance is a fact of life in work or pay. According to Etomes, S. E., & Molua, E. L. (2019) performance is any process by which a teacher reveals his performance in line with his cooperate and function strategies and objectives while improved performance resulted from revised teacher recruitment strategy and improved leadership in schools,

training for leadership was frequently neglected. The impact has reflected on frequently and repeated poor students' academic performance and severe indiscipline among students, absenteeism and drop out of teachers and students and misuse of school's fund.

In the opinion of Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2018) there is no one way of leadership but multiple ways. He explains that leadership is a bond which makes people work together. Anderson, M. H., & Sun, P. Y. (2017) asserts that if leaders want to produce a positive influence on individuals, groups and organisations, then leadership should be broadened from one style to multiple of them depending on the situation. Modern leaders perfectly adopt attitudes that support employees, provide them a vision and encourage them to think innovatively Hughes, D. J., et al. (2018). Paramita, E., et al. (2020) contend that appropriate behavioural pattern of leaders in organisations creates a strong morale in the staff and increases their commitment level.

Leadership styles can be transformational, laissez faire, servant and transactional Thanh, N. H., & Quang, N. V. (2022). Every manager in operational management combines two or more leadership styles which are actually a set of behavioural patterns that frequently occurs during the working life of the organisation. The leadership style adopted is important in organisations as it seeks to get commitment from employees and the successes and failures of every organisation depend on the effectiveness of the leadership style. Chinomona, E., et al. (2017) opines that employee commitment reflects the quality of an organisation's leadership. He asserts that the overall management leadership style is strongly related to the degree of employee commitment.

The relationship between leadership and effectiveness bring to the forefront the relevance of having good and effective managers and the need to examine their roles in enhancing employee commitment. The leader who serves the needs of employees develop the desire to bring out the best in them and this in turn helps to build a sense of affective attachment and belonging to the organisation. The issue of leadership in schools in the Western Rural District is no different from the case of Sierra Leone as a whole. The quality of education and leadership provided in the public basic schools in the Municipality are not the best as students continue to fail massively on yearly basis Sowah, R. (2017).

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

1. Assess the Leadership Styles of School Administrators
2. Examine the Working Relationship between Teachers and School Administrators
3. Determine the Impact of Leadership Styles on School Administrators

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the Leadership Styles of School Administrators?
2. What is the Working Relationship between Teachers and School Administrators?
3. What is the Impact of Leadership Styles on School Administrators?

Methodology

In this study, a mixed methods research approach, involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches was selected. Importantly, an explanatory mixed method (sequential design) was adopted to gather data that focus on leadership styles and teacher performance in primary schools. An explanatory mixed method was used to collect data using quantitative and qualitative approaches, consecutively (that is, first quantitative then qualitative). The qualitative approach was used as it is appropriate for developing an understanding of educational leaders and at the same time, to collect data from them in their natural settings to avoid bias Atsebeha, A. T. (2016).

Many researchers believe that a quantitative approach is suitable for it is helpful to acquire data regarding the perceptions and feelings of groups of respondents Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). To this end, a quantitative approach was indeed appropriate because it could help to reveal the current problems related to principals' leadership styles and their effect on teacher performance in primary schools. Quantitative questionnaires would allow for the collection of quantifiable data on leadership style and teacher performance from a sample. Indeed, the method mentioned above is believed to be appropriate to gather data from many respondents relatively cheaply and easily Yusoff, M. S. B., et al (2021).

In addition, the qualitative approach was used to collect data to answer in-depth questions on leadership style and the level of performance the teachers displayed. This also allowed the researcher to elicit the views of supervisors regarding the effect of leadership styles on teacher effectiveness.

Results and Discussion

Analysis for Answering the Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the Leadership Styles of School Administrators?

Leadership Style	Teachers		Principals and Vice Principals	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Situational	15	37.5	05	50.0
Democratic	10	25.0	03	30.0
Laissez-Faire	08	20.0	01	10.0
Authoritarian	07	17.5	01	10.0
Total	40	100.0	10	100.0

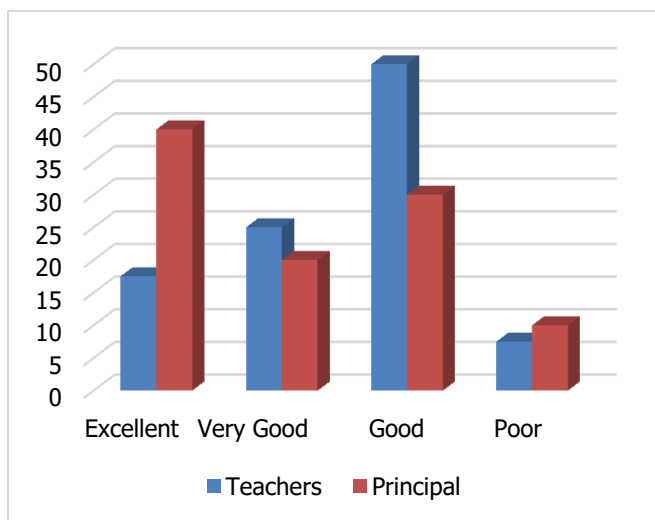
Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1: What are the Leadership Styles of School Administrators?

In Table 1 above, 25.0% of the respondents stated that school administrators utilize a democratic leadership style in handling school matters, and 17.5% stated that school administrators use an authoritarian leadership style. However, 37.5% stated that school administrators use situational leadership style in handling school matters. On the other side, 10% of principals and their deputies said authoritarian style is used in handling school issues and an equal number said they use Laissez-Faire. In contrast, more than half of them said they use situational leadership style in their

administration of school activities in Junior Secondary schools in western Rural district.

Research Question Two: What is the Working Relationship between Teachers and School Administrators

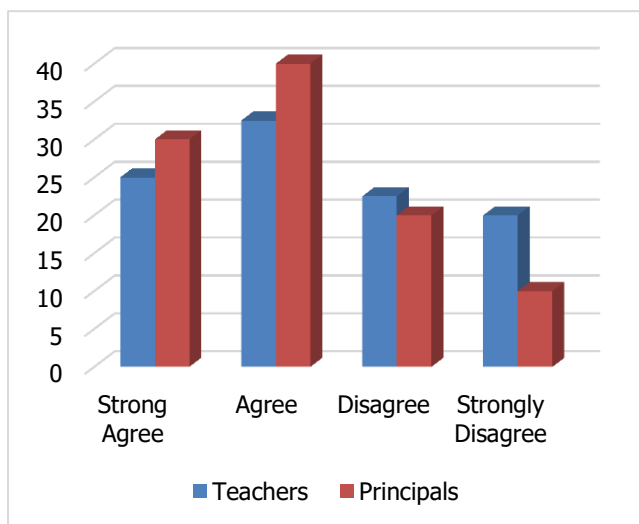


Source: Field Survey 2024

Figure 1: Working Relationship between Teachers and School Administrators

Figure 1 shows that 17.5% of the respondents stated that they have an excellent working relationship with their school administrators, 25.0% of the respondents said the relationship is very good, 50.0% said there is a good working relationship with the school administrators whilst 7.5% of the respondents said the working relationship is poor. However, 40.0% of the principals stated that the working relationship with the teachers is excellent, 20.0% said it is very good and 10.0% said it is poor

Research Question Three: What is the Impact of Leadership Styles on School Administrators?

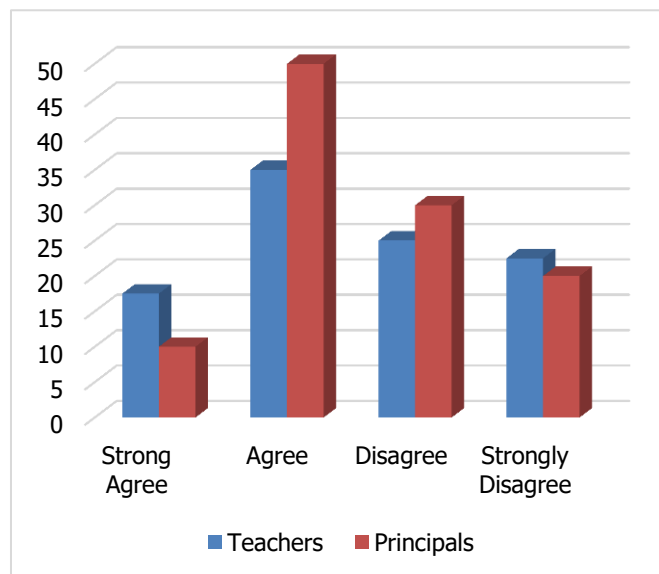


Source: Field Survey 2024

Figure 2: Impact of Leadership Styles on School Administrators

From the data in Figure 2; 25.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that the school leadership styles motivate them to work harder, 32.5% of the respondents agree on the same idea, but 20.0% of the respondents strongly disagree. For the principals,

30.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that teachers are motivated because of the leadership styles exhibited by school administrators whilst 10.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed.



Source: Field Survey 2024

Figure 3: Creation of Positive Work Environment

From the data in Figure 3, 22.5% of the respondents said they strongly agree that the leadership styles of the administrators create a positive working environment, but 20.0% of the respondents disagree whilst 17.5% of the respondents said they strongly disagree. On the side of the principals, 40.0% of them strongly agree that a positive working environment is created by the leadership styles of the school administrators but 20.0% of them strongly disagree

Discussion of Findings

From the interview on what are the Leadership Styles of School Administrators in western Rural District, it could be noted that both sets of respondents largely believe that situational leadership style is commonly used by school administrators in the respective schools. The data aligns with the study conducted by Reed, R. (2019) in which he stated that Situational Leadership (SL) is widely used in educational institutions. It is one of the leadership styles in which school principals adjust his/her style according to the situation to get desirable results Wachira, F. M., Gitumu, M., & Mbugua, Z. (2017). Situational leadership theory posits that a leader acts and makes decisions under consideration of situational factors. There are many leadership styles but not all styles effectively work in the same situation. Therefore, organization leaders choose appropriate styles that give better results according to the situation. In other situations, a situational leadership system would work better when the leaders are knowledgeable about the situation. Since it was developed by Dr. Paul Hersey, author of "The Situational Leader," and Kenneth Blanchard, author of "One-Minute Manager," situational leadership theory is frequently referred to as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory Thompson, G., & Glasø, L. (2018).

The findings in Figure 1 concur with the findings of Rai, J. K. (2018) which indicated that the elements of a productive relationship between a school administrator and a teacher exist when "they recognize they cannot help all students unless they work together collaboratively, and they constantly seek tangible evidence that students have acquired intended knowledge"

Administrators can create such conditions where they endeavor to create shared leadership, provide teachers and faculty members with productive and effective support and collaboration programs, and choose effective professional development opportunities. Rai, J. K. (2018) suggested that school improvements cannot rest solely on the school administrator, but through the empowerment of others. Principals have the daunting tasks of providing teachers with the tools needed for their individual and collective successes while effectively balancing decisions that can affect the productivity of the school as a whole

The findings in figure 2 are in line with the findings of Sala, P. T. (2019) which stated that attention has been drawn to teacher motivation as an undoubtedly essential factor owing to an increase in awareness of classroom realities "since the teacher's motivation has significant bearings on students' motivational disposition and, more generally, on their learning achievement" Moreover, he further supports his previous statement by claiming that teachers, who hold the key position to shape classroom dynamics, are fundamental to the process of transforming a classroom into a motivating learning environment as this transformation starts with them

The findings in Figure 3 are in line with the findings of Berthelsen, H., et al. (2018). They stated the factors that affect the working environment generally consist of the physical and psychological working environment. Physical environmental factors are the environment around the teachers themselves. Conditions in the working environment can affect teachers' satisfaction, which includes (1) workspace plans, (2) job designs, (3) working environment conditions, and (4) visual privacy and acoustic privacy levels. Meanwhile, psychological-environmental factors are matters relating to social and organizational relationships. Psychological conditions that affect teachers' satisfaction are (1) excessive work, (2) poor supervision systems, (3) frustration, (4) changes in all forms, and (5) disputes between individuals and groups.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To ensure the schools' survival and improve performances, teachers must be motivated beyond ordinary expectations by appealing to their higher-order needs and moral values. Achieving these requires the use of transformational leadership. The findings from the study on head teachers' leadership styles demonstrate that head teachers employ a transformational style of leadership in schools. This style of leadership on the part of head teachers provides a sense of belonging to teachers and makes them ready to defend the objectives and goals of the school. The implication is that teachers at any point in time are committed to providing the best for the schools and ensuring higher performances.

Teachers are influenced by the effectiveness of leadership, behavior, and supportiveness of head teachers in their commitment to the schools. The implication is that teachers experience a low level of frustration in the schools as many of the teachers have cordial relationships with head teachers. This to a large extent explains teachers's positive attitude toward their head teachers and the conduciveness of organizational climate in schools.

The study revealed that even though the relationship between leadership and commitment is weak, there is a significant and positive relationship between head teachers' leadership and affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This means that teachers' commitment could be heightened indirectly by

promoting head teachers' leadership style. It can be concluded that teachers recognize leadership styles as important in improving commitment.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE and the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (CPSS) should organize in-service training for school administrators in the practice of the full range of leadership styles to increase the commitment levels of teachers.
2. School administrators should balance the demands of management in the administrative workload and the need to provide leadership to the teachers.
3. School administrators should work to improve the effectiveness of their leadership style because not all teachers are happier with their leadership styles.
4. Efforts should be made to involve teachers in the decision-making process in the school to boost their level of commitment.

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