

Educational Leadership and Learners' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Developing Countries: A Critical Review

ABSTRACT

The study explored three leadership styles in education for students' academic achievement in secondary schools viz: democratic, laissez-faire and autocratic leadership styles in developing countries. The main crux of the study was examining the impact of heads of schools' leadership towards academic achievement of secondary schools' students and recommending the most effective leadership style for heads. In-depth study of heads of schools' leadership styles to students' academic achievement through systematic review of previous related literature was conducted. The study used qualitative method to analyse 49 published documents of which 5 were books published from 2002 to 2023 and 44 were papers published from 2006 to 2023 years. This study was confined in the following sample of countries Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa. Also, supplementary papers from Kuwait and USA were reviewed to study more how leadership in education is done. The findings showed that no single leadership style in educational context fits all schools' environments. Moreover, it was shown that most heads of schools prefer the use of the democratic type of leadership style which does not fit all schools' environments. The studies revealed that educational situations differ, thus the leadership style chosen should rely on the school situation. The current study recommends some effective measures for leadership development of secondary schools' heads.

Keywords: Academic achievement, Educational leadership, Heads of schools, Leadership styles, Secondary schools.

1.0 Introduction: Educational leadership is a fundamental pillar of educational institutions' development. Educational leadership's influence in shaping students' academic achievement cannot be underestimated. School administrators bear the responsibility of educational leadership, aiming to bring about positive changes in educational policies for the improvement of education quality while guiding teachers in enhancing educational processes (Nsubuga & Mandela, 2008). Effective leadership qualities encompass having a vision, establishing efficient organizational structures, acting as a inspirer, motivator, and role model to others, empowering, delegating and time managing effectively. Leadership styles applied by heads of schools have a direct impact on school achievement, influencing the performance of both national and school-specific oriented goals. Kambambovu, (2018) presented a variety of theories of leadership such as normative decision theory, behaviour theory, path-goal theory and cognitive resource theory. Various leadership styles were identified by these theories including authoritarian (autocratic), laissez-faire and democratic. The democratic style of leadership emphasizes collaboration, coordination and cooperation with the involvement of individuals in decision-making processes under a democratic management approach (Suraya, & Yunus, 2012). In this style, subordinates have a significant function in making decisions, implementing of teaching systems, and academic policy, leading to discipline and academic excellence in schools. Conversely, autocratic leadership involves limited participation in decision-making, where the manager retains most control to ensure

compliance among staff (Paul, 2018). This style is often disliked by individuals as it restricts their initiative, ability to assess their environment, and personal growth. Teachers and students in schools led by authoritarian leaders may feel uncomfortable and fearful, limiting their skills, ability and talent. However, there are situations where the appropriate leadership style can be autocratic like when the leader possesses all the necessary information to resolve an issue, when time is limited, and staff members are highly lazy (Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, 2013). Despite the importance of educational leadership, many secondary schools face various challenges which hinder students' academic achievement. Issues such as lack of qualified leaders, insufficient resources, inadequate training and professional development opportunities, and ineffective leadership practices can contribute to poor academic outcomes among students. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the impact of heads of schools' leadership styles on the academic achievement of students and provide understanding to the government and education institutional leaders on how the choice of school leadership style influences school students' academic achievement and hence come up with further strategies for improvement.

1.1 Concept of Educational Leadership: Education leadership refers to the process of guiding and influencing educational institutions, systems, and stakeholders to achieve their goals and improve overall educational outcomes. It involves the skills, knowledge, and practices employed by individuals in leadership positions within educational organizations, such as principals, superintendents, department heads, and administrators. The concept of educational leadership has evolved, with various theories and models shaping its understanding and application (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Leadership is the term used to describe the capacity of an individual to exert influence over others, shaping the dynamics and interactions within groups or organizations. It is commonly known as a social process of influencing others (Davis, 2016). Leadership concepts vary based on several factors, including the source of influence, how influence is exerted, the intended goals of that influence, and the resulting consequences. Specifically, when it comes to educational leadership, it primarily revolves around formal positions within schools or educational institutions. These leaders play a crucial role in guiding and managing educational settings to achieve specific objectives and outcomes. So, this paper discusses the leadership styles which are employed in secondary schools by principals/heads of schools and the influence they have on students' academic achievement. More emphasis was directed on the three styles of leadership which are: autocratic, laissez-faire and democratic.

1.2 Styles of Leadership: Styles of Leadership are the diverse approaches employed by leaders to inspire and motivate their followers. It is essential to understand that leadership is not a uniform or one-size-fits-all concept. Different situations, organizations, groups, and individuals require distinct leadership styles for optimal effectiveness. Leaders should be able to choose and adapt their leadership style based on the specific context and the unique characteristics of their followers. This flexibility allows leaders to better address the needs and challenges of their environment, fostering a more successful and harmonious leadership dynamic. The choice of these three leadership styles for this paper is grounded on the use of the Contingency theory whose focus is on variables particularly those related to the environment that could assist to determine the leadership style which best could suit a particular situation of the work. From the theoretical point of view, no single style of leadership is academically productive in all school situations. Student academic performance mostly depends on several factors which include qualities of

followers, situational features and leadership style. Contingency theory suggests that successful leadership relies on how well the leader's qualities and leadership style align with the requirements of a particular situation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Consequently, it is crucial for school principals to have a comprehensive grasp of various leadership styles. This understanding significantly enhances their potential to lead effectively and positively impacts students' academic achievements. The leadership styles discussed in this paper are Autocratic, Laissez-faire and Democratic Leadership Styles.

- 1.3 Democratic Leadership Style:** Numerous studies conducted on leadership styles in educational institutions consistently advocate for the democratic leadership approach, as it has been shown to enhance students' academic performance (Nsubuga & Mandela, 2008). By adopting this leadership style, students actively engage in the school's administration, leading to the maintenance of high academic standards. The principal plays a crucial role in fostering this approach by encouraging and acknowledging the contributions of all members, thus contributing to the school's overall success. Research conducted by (Belfield & Levin, 2002) supported the idea that the democratic/participative leadership style has the potential to improve student achievement. In this essence, democratic leadership involves consulting with others before giving orders, facilitating discussions to develop policies, sharing plans before expecting action, and involving groups in decision-making. The positive outcomes of this leadership style include improved work quality, constructive collaboration among members, and a sense of ownership of decisions made. However, it's essential to acknowledge that the democratic leadership style also has some weaknesses like a lack of strong follow-ups by leaders which results in some students and teachers becoming complacent or neglecting their responsibilities and truancy for both students and teachers (Ozdemir et al., 2022).
- 1.4 Leadership Style of Laissez-faire:** In this style of Leadership, school leaders tend to provide little guidance or direction to their team, allowing them to make their own decisions and work independently. This approach is often characterized by a hands-off approach, with the leader giving their team members the freedom to pursue their own goals and objectives. (Brown & Owusu, 2014) explains the strengths of laissez-faire leadership such as increased autonomy and creativity among team members, as well as a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for their work. This can lead to greater job satisfaction and motivation, as team members feel trusted and empowered to make their own decisions. Additionally, this leadership style is effective in circumstances where the team members are highly skilled and experienced, like work and require minimal supervision. However, this leadership style has some challenges including failure to complete the syllabus due to teachers' laziness, students' indiscipline cases increasing and teachers staying in the working environment for a few hours then they leave. Also, the results showed that a leader who adopts this enables the institutional members to perform their duties properly to meet the objectives and organization's goals. This is because the principal or head of the school gets them involved in the management of the school, also subordinates are empowered to work with freedom and free will. This exerts a favourable influence on students' academic performance (Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, n.d.2013). Research suggests that the effectiveness of leadership styles varies based on situational factors and the attributes of subordinates. However, in the majority of cases, leaders need to be adaptable and employ the appropriate style as required.

1.5 Autocratic Leadership Style: Autocratic leadership, also known as the authoritarian style, grants full authority to the leader while minimizing input from followers. Within this system, the leader takes charge and directs group members on how tasks should be accomplished, without maintaining clear communication channels for subordinates to participate in policy-making. Research by Nir (2014) indicates that autocratic leaders display several distinctive characteristics, such as not consulting with organization members in decision-making, setting all policies, predetermining work methods, specifying followers' duties, and setting technical and achievement evaluation standards. Due to its concentration of decision-making on a single individual, this leadership style allows for rapid decision-making. Although the autocratic approach may not be widely favoured, it can prove productive and effective, particularly in certain circumstances where followers are lazy hence followers need to work under the supervision of the leader for the best students' academic achievement. Autocratic leadership seeks the goal success of the organization.

In Autocratic head of the school, takes full power and authority over processes related to decision-making and gives the direction of the organization. In an autocratic leadership style, the leader exercises full control and makes all the decisions without seeking the opinions or suggestions of subordinates. Quick decision-making, consistency in direction, and the ability to maintain order and structure within an organization are among the merits of autocratic leadership. Autocratic leaders are often effective in crises where immediate action is required. Despite its advantages, this style has some demerits, these include a lack of input and feedback from subordinates, limited creativity and innovation, and low morale among employees who may feel undervalued and unimportant (Ross & Gray, 2006). Moreover, autocratic leaders may also struggle to retain talented employees who prefer a more collaborative work environment.

2.0 Educational Leadership in Developing Countries: Education leadership in developing countries is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by various factors such as government policies, socio-economic conditions, cultural contexts, and resource availability. The concept of educational leadership in developing countries cannot be separated from institutional achievements. There is a direct link between school academic achievement and general institutional achievement in all sectors. Outstanding educational leadership has frequently been identified as a defining feature of outstanding schools' achievements (Tedla et al., 2021) Successful school development involves both leadership and management. Leadership at a learning institution, such as a school, focuses on vision, motivation, and teamwork, all aiming to achieve specified goals. The leader assists the school in establishing goals, behavioural norms and academic standards for the whole school members (Tedla et al., 2021). The school head organises and manages all development programmes, improves employees, allocates resources, and student achievement by encouraging and guiding them to achieve the school's goals. Following the identification of the objectives of the schools, school leaders ensure that the objectives are stated and implemented by students and teachers. These leaders are also seniors in charge of after-school events. They monitor employee and student activities outside of the school, develop engagement with local organisations, and collaborate with families and business organisations (Busher et al. 2000). Finally, it is the primary responsibility of school administrators to ensure that student accomplishment reaches its maximum potential (Karadağ et al., 2015).

During the early years of the twenty-first century, there has been a growing fascination with educational leadership. This interest stems from the prevailing belief that the calibre of leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of both schools and

students. Across the globe, in developed and developing nations alike, there is a rising acknowledgement that schools must have capable and efficient leaders and managers to ensure the most effective and optimal education for their students (Bush, 2007). In essence, the significance of educational leadership has garnered immense attention in the early twenty-first century, owing to the widely held conviction that it profoundly influences school and student achievements. Various countries, regardless of their development status, are increasingly recognizing the necessity of competent leaders and managers in educational institutions to deliver the best possible education to their students (Ibid)

Governments are increasingly realizing that highly skilled workers are crucial to the development of educational institutions especially students' academic achievement. That is committed and trained teachers, but they, in turn, need an effective leader of high skills to support other members fulfil their goals through making the suitable and relevant choice of leadership style depending on the school situation.

Various factors influence educational leadership in developing countries, shaping the efficacy and outcomes of educational institutions in terms of academic attainment. Here are some key aspects influencing educational leadership in emerging countries: socioeconomic factors, political and cultural factors (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The political situation and government policies significantly affect educational leadership. Educational leaders must critically analyze the complex political environment, policy changes, and reforms.

Political and policy changes directly affect educational leadership in developing countries (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). On the other hand, socioeconomic factors, including poverty, income disparities, and limited resources, greatly influence educational leadership in schools. (Lazaridou & Iordanides, 2011) proposed that educational leadership should consider cultural and contextual factors that shape the local school landscape. It involves understanding local traditions, values, and beliefs to develop culturally responsive leadership approaches. (Tedla et al., 2021) stipulates that leadership styles used in educational institutions tend to influence the school's achievement either positively or negatively and no a single leadership style which is proper in all schools and at the same time.

3.0 Academic Achievement in Developing Countries: Academic achievement in developing countries' schools, such as Tanzania, is a significant concern that has been extensively studied in recent years. It has been noted that some schools have performed poorly under the leadership of some heads. However, the same staff when given another leader performs better. According to (Ross & Gray, 2006), there are many factors contributing to poor academic achievement. Some of the key factors include lack of adequate infrastructure and resources in schools, including limited access to textbooks, outdated teaching materials, and overcrowded classrooms as well as leadership style among others. Additionally, a shortage of qualified teachers and low motivation among educators further exacerbate the problem (Maganga, 2016). These challenges require a comprehensive approach that includes investment in infrastructure, teacher training particularly in leadership skills, and curriculum reform, to alleviate the challenge of unsatisfactory students' academic achievement in secondary schools. However, this study focuses on the leadership styles employed in schools by educational leaders in developing countries. This is to pave the way for improved academic achievement and better educational outcomes for their students.

Academic achievement can be explained as the ability of an individual to display the skills and competence, through writing or speaking what one has acquired from the

classroom. In this current research report, academic achievement is confined to the excellence of education with the set pass marks by the responsible Ministries. Literature shows that there are numerous studies which investigated the contribution of educational leadership on students' academic achievement in secondary (Nilson &

Zimmerman, (2013) There are several factors which contribute to students' achievement in schools such as:

Leadership plays a crucial role in establishing a positive school climate and culture, which in turn affects students' academic achievement. Leaders who create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment promote student engagement, motivation, and overall achievement Parent and Community involvement is another factor which contributes to students' academic achievement Epstein & Boone (2022). that school leaders who actively involve parents and the community in school activities and decision-making processes have a positive impact on student achievement. Lastly, educational leaders should be able to communicate effectively. School leaders need to possess strong communication skills which are essential to convey expectations, provide feedback, and build relationships with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Clear and consistent communication positively influences academic achievement (Anderson & Pounder, 2018)

4.0 Literature: Different kinds of literature related to educational leadership and their influence on students' academic achievement were reviewed in this section. Moreover, those related to the most effective leadership style in secondary schools. A review of related literature was analysed based on the following subheadings:

- Impact of educational leadership style on students' academic achievement
- Most effective leadership style in secondary schools

4.1 Impact of Leadership Style Used in Education on Students' Achievement (academically): Leadership plays a significant role in students' achievements specifically in educational institutions (Ratiola, 2009). Schools do well in both academic and non-academic-oriented activities when there is active leadership (Obama et al., 2016). Several things influence the academic achievement of students in schools, Literature shows that school heads leadership styles have a minimal direct impact on student achievement (Kapela, et al 2006). On the other hand, Yasmin, et al. (2019), emphasizes that leadership has no direct influence on student outcomes, but indirectly impacts instructional organization and culture which leads to students' academic achievement being stable or unstable. However, (Kapela, et al 2006). argues that leadership styles used by heads/principals impact academic achievement directly to both the pupils and indirectly their teachers by raising or demotivating their morale to work efficiently and students to study hard respectively.

MacNeil, et al. (2009). suggested that students achieve higher outcomes in schools with healthy learning environments. This means the school principal can create a school culture that promotes and inspires learning, which can lead to student achievement improvement. This is in line with Lazaridou & Iordanides (2011) who suggested that the school principal cannot affect directly student achievement but indirectly may affect learning by impacting the environment which becomes uncondusive for effective learning in the particular school. Additionally, investigations into the secondary impact of principal leadership on student results have indicated that

educational leadership is connected to the school's organization and culture, which in turn, influences student achievement (Witziers et al., 2003).

Leaders in educational institutions have a role to play in ensuring effective student academic achievement. The way and style used by secondary school leaders/principals impact school capacity to ensure learners perform well academically (Hardman, 2011). For a school to achieve well in academics, an effective leader is required. A proficient educational leader is someone who possesses the skill to foster a school's potential for improving student learning by motivating teachers, staff, and students (Guarino et al., 2006).

Leadership in Educational is a multifaceted and intricate process that involves the art of inspiring, motivating, and guiding teachers, learners and others towards achieving set goals (Fischer et al., 2017). Leaders should strive to promote unity, harmony, strength, and prosperity in the school community as well as help to achieve the agreed objectives (Barbosa, et al., 2017). Recent research has revealed that headmasters/principals should be given and equipped with skills, knowledge and techniques related to leadership for ensuring that they influence their schools and academic work successfully. The emphasis on the impacts of the style of leadership on students' academic success in schools was insisted. Consequently, it is suggested that teachers' training institutions should include education on the styles, principles and techniques of leadership in their curriculum. This approach aims to nurture potential leaders from an early stage in their education. The findings align with previous research conducted by John, and Mkulu, (2020), who also advocates for the government to assign school heads who have received leadership training and to enhance frequently the leadership skills of existing school administrators to update their knowledge for the students' achievement.

4.2 Most Effective Leadership Style in Secondary Schools: In 2023, Ferdinandi & Kiwonde suggested that heads of schools should be motivated to adopt a democratic leadership style for effective school management which will lead to academic achievement for students too. This recommendation was based on the positive outcomes observed in their research, indicating that democratic style of leadership was seen to be the most beneficial for enhancing students' academic performance in secondary schools, and it is suitable more in educational settings where schools boast a strong and commendable culture with deep-rooted religious values, the majority of teachers are intrinsically motivated, genuinely passionate about teaching, and devoted to their school, Hence making constant supervision unnecessarily is not needed as they willingly collaborate and contribute to objectives success of the institution.

Obama et al. (2016) in their study Principals' Leadership Style and Academic Achievement of Students' in Public Secondary owned Schools (Gyasi, et al., 2016), came with the results that the most successful effective leadership style for secondary school students is autocratic as instructional supervision provides the teachers with instructions which make them more responsible for the achievement of the school goals. The supervision of instruction is widely recognized as a critical method for ensuring the overall quality of educational institutions.

Duze, (2012), discovered in Kogi State, Nigeria, it was observed that the prevailing leadership style among senior secondary school principals was authoritarian. Moreover, chemistry students, who were led by principals who followed democratic principles, achieved superior academic performance compared to their peers who were under the guidance of authoritative and laissez-faire principals. The researchers found that the democratic leadership style was more effective for academic achievement for students in schools (Al-Safran, , et al., 2014), found that autocratic leadership got good

results for students who were under this kind of educational leadership in schools and teachers also were so cooperative to the heads of schools as they were following the orders from the leader and all academic activities were done as expected by the schools' leaders and the researcher recommended it to be effective in schools for good performance.

The research was done comparing leadership styles between schools in Kuwait and the USA revealing distinct differences. In Kuwaiti schools, principals tended to adopt an authoritative leadership style. However, despite this autocratic/authoritative nature, the data indicated that schools with a cooperative and collaborative environment demonstrated better academic outcomes. This suggests that under an authoritarian style, fostering a sense of cooperation among students, teachers, and administrators is possible as in Kuwait schools that used it, managed to improve overall school academic performance for students. Bello, et al. (2016) found that there were no notable connections between the school leaders' styles and the students' achievement academically in selected schools. Additionally, the research showed that none of the three leadership styles examined emerged as a superior predictor of learners' academic achievement in researched secondary schools. As a result, the study suggests that school administrators should explore diverse administrative approaches to achieve the desired outcomes of improving students' academic achievement.

Table 1
Summarizes the Literature Review on Leadership Styles and their Findings

SN	LEADERSHIP STYLE	LITERATURE	FINDINGS
1	Democratic leadership style.	(Ferdinandi & Kiwonde, 2023)	This style favoured positive outcomes in students' academic achievements, particularly within an educational environment characterized by a commendable culture and robust religious principles.
		(Obama et al., 2016)	This style showed a greater constructive impact on the students' achievements in secondary school academics.
		(Achimugu & Obaka, 2019)	Democratic style of leadership was more influential for academic achievement in secondary school students.
		(Kambambovu, 2018)	The style is verified to be the most effective in enhancing the academic success of students in junior and senior secondary schools.
		(Ratego, 2015)	This style has a great influence on student's academic achievement in secondary schools.
2	Autocratic leadership style	(Tedla, et al., 2021)	Students' achievement is positively influenced by adopting a democratic and situational leadership style.
		(Ferdinandi, et al., 2023)	This leadership approach adversely affects academic achievement as it employs a harsh style that is unpopular among both teachers and

SN	LEADERSHIP STYLE	LITERATURE	FINDINGS
			students, resulting in a detrimental impact on students' academic performance.
		(Tedla, et al., 2021)	This style was found to have a negative influence on school learners' academic achievement.
		(Pepper & Thomas, 2017)	There is a direct effect of the autocratic style of leadership on school students' academic achievement.
		(Atsebeha, 2016).	It was found to be more successful in academic achievement of students in schools. where leaders were equipped with leadership skills and were able to improve their schools' achievement by providing strong motivation to the leader.
		(Bunmi, 2007)	It had absolute power over teachers and it resulted in the best outcomes in students' academic achievement from supervision.
		(Akaro, 2017)	The style was successful in the academic achievement of students in schools that had enough leadership skills principals and were able to improve their schools' achievement by providing full supervision for the teachers to be responsible for the teaching and learning process of students.
3	Laissez-faire leadership style	(Nsubuga, 2005)	This leadership style does not significantly influence students' academic performance. The technique leads to failure to make follow up and as they delegate tasks, achievement remains the dream as no positive impact is observed.
		(Nguyeni & Glover, 2017)	This led to a positive association with psychological well-being among teachers which led to a good spirit of work which led to good achievement of students academically.
		(Boke, Nyakundi & Nyamwoka, 2017)	Students' academic achievement was relatively low which was due to the leadership style used and it led to lack of teachers' and students' discipline.
		(Isundwa, 2015)	It had negative influence on students' achievement due to the leader did not bother to tell subordinates their wrongs or weaknesses accountability.
		(Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, 2013)	The approach encourages teachers to fulfil their responsibilities efficiently and achieve the organization's objectives. By involving them in the school's management and empowering subordinates to work freely. As a result, this approach has an academic and beneficial influence on students' performance.
	Laissez-faire, Democratic and Autocratic leadership styles	(Bello et al., 2016)	The study revealed that there is no notable correlation between the administrative approaches of heads and the academic achievement of students in junior and senior (ordinary and advanced) secondary schools.

SN	LEADERSHIP STYLE	LITERATURE	FINDINGS
		(Nsubuga, 2008)	Mixing leadership styles in running schools got better students' academic achievement in the national examinations.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Methods:

This part describes the approach the article used to evaluate various published documents related to educational leadership and learners' academic achievement in secondary schools. The study employed qualitative method that involved systematic evaluation of related and relevant published papers (Journal articles on the current topic), annual reports from UNESCO and books that focused on developing African countries. Papers published between 2006 and 2023 as well as few books published between 2002 and 2023. The published papers and books were searched from electronic oriented databases including; google scholar, ERIC, PubMed and institutional websites. To uncover patterns and common themes in research, data synthesis applied thematic analysis. Qualitative synthesis of data used meta synthesis approach. The researcher used keywords like educational leadership, Leadership styles, Students' Academic achievement, Heads of School/principals, and Secondary schools to search for data required for the study.

5.2 Study design: The researcher applied qualitative study design which focused on explaining and understanding experiences and views related to education leadership and learners' academic achievement in secondary schools found in African developing countries.

5.3 Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

Date of Publication: Papers published before 2006 were excluded, whereas those papers which were published from 2006 and above were included.

5.4 Study Settings: Secondary schools managed by government in the developing African countries were included and its vice versa were excluded in this study.

5.5 Data analysis: Data collected from 49 relevant and related references to the current topic were analysed qualitatively using thematic technique.

6.0 The rationale of the Paper: Education is increasingly prioritised in the world's more affluent nations. In some advanced nations, people in positions of authority must first undergo formal education to ensure a good fit. Leadership in secondary schools is essential for the successful administration of both academic and extracurricular programmes. The capacity to motivate students and staff is crucial for principals. It has been theorised that principals' administrative and managerial practises influence student academic achievement and, by extension, school success. Therefore, many elements, including the kind of leadership practised in schools, affect the development of education and the accomplishment of schools and students. Principals and other school leaders contribute a significant impact on the achievements of the students, so it is important to invest in their professional development. Hence, principals are responsible for ensuring that schools have a conducive environment for both teachers and students.

The number of studies investigating the impacts of leadership on academic achievement is surprisingly high. However, the existing literature does not provide an explicit explanation of the direct connection or correlation between styles of leadership and learners' academic achievement in schools in developing countries. Therefore, the current paper aims at finding out explicitly the effect of educational styles of leadership practised in schools on the academic achievement of students.

7.0 Objectives of the Paper: The following objectives guided this study:

- i. To examine the impacts of leadership styles on the secondary students' academic achievement.
- ii. To recommend the most effective style of leadership for school students' academic achievement.

8.0 Results and Discussion: Some researchers conducted studies on educational leadership and students' academic achievement like Ferdinandi and Kiwonde, (2023), Obama et al., (2016), Achimugu and Obaka, (2019), Kambambovu (2018), Ratego (2015) and Tedla, et al. (2021) got the results that Democratic leadership is the best style for the principals for students' academic achievement while other studies done by Catherine (2023), Tedla, et al. (2021). Atsebeha (2016), Bunmi (2007) and Akaro, (2017) proved with the results that autocratic leadership was the best for secondary heads of schools as it was found so successful in students' academic achievement. However other research conducted by Nsubuga (2005), Nguyeni and Glover (2017), Boke, Nyakundi & Nyamwoka (2017), Isundwa (2015), Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, (2013) found that the leadership style of Laissez-faire brought positive outcomes to student academic achievement in secondary schools where the principals/heads of schools applied it as teachers were working under their self-morale and that style used as motivation to teachers. Moreover (Bello, et al (2016), wrote that there was no signified contribution of styles of heads leadership and students' academic achievement in senior schools. Whereas Nsubuga (2008) asserts that leadership style(s) are chosen depending on the situation of students and teachers in a particular school. It was recommended that mixed styles were the best, as one can use one of the leadership styles out of the three discussed to enhance the academic achievement of students. However, the use of styles leadership depends on the given situation of the educational institution. This means there are situations where the principal can use either Laissez-faire, autocratic or democratic style of leadership. This indicates that all given three types of leadership styles can be used at different times in one educational institution.

9.0 Conclusions:

This study aims to examine the impacts of leadership styles on the secondary students' academic achievement, as well as to suggest the most effective style of leadership for students' academic achievement. The study findings revealed that in the most schools, principals or heads of schools use democratic leadership styles, while some leaders use authoritative leadership style. However, the selection of leadership style is situational, that means hinges on the several factors including nature and readiness of teachers towards their responsibility, school culture, the philosophy of the school, nature and level of students among others. This research has confirmed a positive impact of the leadership approach adopted by secondary school principals/heads to academic performance of students. Literature shows that *no single size fits all*, which means no single leadership style can fit all situations and school environments. Kapela, et.al. (2021) and MANTEP,

(1995) assert that no universally applicable leadership style suits all situations; instead, it relies on various factors like established objectives, existing organizational structures, individual characteristics of team members, and available resources. Consequently, no single leadership approach can be effective at all times. The selection of a particular leadership style base on the specific tasks at hand and the level of authority required for the circumstances.

10.0 Recommendations

Based on the systematic review of the educational leadership and learners' academic achievement in developing countries, the study therefore, recommends that all styles can be used depending on the situation and nature of the school. Different principals or heads of schools can choose to use different leadership styles depending on their schools' situations or philosophy. Further, much effort should be taken by the developing countries governments concerning training school leaders by conducting frequent seminars, workshops, conferences, and short courses in leadership to improve general schools' performance.

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