



Available Online at EScience Press
International Journal of Education Foundations
ISSN: 3078-7866 (Online), 3078-7858 (Print)
<https://ijef.esciencepress.net>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Heads of Schools' Leadership Skills on School Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Rorya District, Mara Region-Tanzania

^aAugostino Pius, ^bAtegwu Patrick Ogar, ^bDemetria Mkulu

^aNyanduga secondary school, Rolya, Mara, Tanzania

^bDepartment of Education Foundations, St. Augustine University of Tanzania

Corresponding Author

Augostino Pius Email: augostino39@gmail.com

Author's Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this research.

Article History

Received : November 10, 2025; Accepted: January 28, 2026; Published: March 14, 2026.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the influence of heads of schools' leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Rorya District, Mara Region, Tanzania. One specific objective was adopted for the study. The study was guided by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes vision creation, motivation, collaboration, empowerment, and support for improved organizational performance. A mixed-methods approach using an explanatory research design was employed. The study involved 112 respondents, including 96 teachers, five heads of schools, five Ward Education Officers, and one District Education Officer. Data were collected through questionnaires Tagged HEAD OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SKILL(HSLSQ) and SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS(SEQ) as well as semi-structured interviews. The instrument were validated by expert in measurement and evaluation as well as expert in educational foundations. The reliability of the instrument were obtained through Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.75. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics through SPSS version w26, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings showed that respondents understood leadership skills as involving teamwork, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and guidance. Most respondents 88.5% confirmed that heads of schools apply various leadership skills, with communication, decision-making, and supervision being the most common. Democratic leadership, teacher involvement, instructional guidance, and delegation were found to enhance school effectiveness, although challenges such as limited collaboration, centralized decision-making, and laissez-faire practices affected accountability and supervision. The study concludes that heads of schools' leadership skills significantly influence school effectiveness through improved management practices, teacher performance, and achievement of educational goals. The study recommends strengthening continuous professional development programmes for school heads, focusing on collaborative leadership, strategic planning, problem-solving, and instructional supervision to enhance school effectiveness in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Leadership skills, school heads, school effectiveness, transformational leadership

INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness largely depends on the leadership skills of heads of schools because they are responsible for establishing a clear vision, coordinating school activities, supervising teaching and learning, managing

resources, motivating teachers, and ensuring the achievement of educational goals. Effective leadership skills, including communication, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, instructional supervision, and stakeholder engagement, enable heads of schools

to create supportive learning environments and improve institutional performance. Ismail et al.(2022) explain that school effectiveness is reflected in the achievement of educational goals, improved students' academic performance, effective teaching and learning processes, efficient utilization of resources, and stakeholder satisfaction. Similarly, Ategwu et al. (2023) observed that school effectiveness is closely associated with the quality of instructional delivery, while Mwita (2025) argues that managerial and leadership competencies of school heads provide the foundation for aligning school activities with national educational standards. Jerab (2024) further emphasizes that effective school leadership involves vision setting, staff development, instructional supervision, and maintaining a student-centred approach. Mkulu and Ategwu (2024) added that effective leadership requires synergy between leaders and subordinates, which can be strengthened through a conducive working environment and effective supervision. These studies therefore demonstrate that leadership skills are an important factor in determining the effectiveness of schools.

Globally, empirical evidence has demonstrated that competent school leaders contribute to improved educational outcomes by effectively combining managerial and instructional responsibilities. In Finland, for example, school leaders are expected to manage school resources effectively, promote collaboration among teachers, enhance instructional quality, and strengthen partnerships with communities to improve school performance (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2025). Similarly, evidence from the United Kingdom and the United States indicates that effective school leadership contributes to improved student achievement through strategic resource management, teacher motivation, instructional support, and accountability mechanisms (Dabesa & Cheramlak, 2021). However, Nyaibuli and Mwila (2024) note that schools in developing countries continue to experience leadership challenges, including inadequate preparation of school heads, limited opportunities for professional development, weak managerial capacity, and insufficient resources. Although these studies establish the importance of leadership skills in improving school effectiveness, much of the global evidence has been generated in educational contexts with relatively different leadership structures, resource availability, and accountability systems from those found in Tanzania. This creates a contextual need to examine how specific leadership skills influence school effectiveness within the Tanzanian public secondary school context.

In Africa, school leadership has become increasingly important because heads of schools are required to address challenges associated with increasing enrolment, inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, limited learning resources, and changing educational demands. In Zambia, Godwin and Kabeta

(2019) found that effective school leaders improved school performance through strategic planning, staff motivation, and instructional leadership practices that strengthened teacher commitment and classroom instruction. In Kenya, Murugi and Mugwe (2023) and Wanjuan and Muyunda (2023) similarly reported that effective planning, instructional supervision, resource management, and stakeholder engagement by school heads were associated with improved educational outcomes. Nevertheless, the studies also identified inadequate leadership preparation and limited professional development as factors constraining the effectiveness of school heads. These African studies provide useful evidence that leadership skills can contribute to school effectiveness; however, they have largely focused on countries outside Tanzania and may not adequately explain the influence of leadership skills within the particular administrative, socio-economic, and educational circumstances of Tanzanian public secondary schools. Therefore, there remains a need for context-specific evidence on which leadership skills are most influential in strengthening school effectiveness in Tanzania.

In Tanzania, heads of public secondary schools are expected to provide instructional leadership, supervise teachers, manage financial and physical resources, coordinate school activities, motivate staff, and promote collaboration with parents and other stakeholders. The Education and Training Policy emphasize effective school leadership as an important mechanism for strengthening accountability, efficient management, and quality education delivery (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2025). Despite these policy expectations, evidence suggests that public secondary schools continue to experience challenges related to increasing student enrolment, teacher shortages, inadequate learning facilities, limited resources, and differences in the managerial and leadership competencies of school heads (Chacha & Tangi, 2023). Mwita (2025) further highlights the importance of managerial and leadership competencies in aligning school operations with educational standards. However, the available literature has not sufficiently established how individual leadership skills such as communication, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, instructional supervision, and stakeholder engagement influence school effectiveness at the district level. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence to determine whether the leadership skills possessed and practised by heads of schools are adequately contributing to effective teaching and learning, teacher performance, resource utilization, and achievement of school objectives in particular Tanzanian districts.

The problem is therefore that, although school leadership is recognized in policy and previous studies as an important determinant of school effectiveness, public secondary schools may continue to experience

variations in teaching and learning quality, teacher performance, resource utilization, stakeholder participation, and achievement of institutional goals. The existence of leadership-related challenges does not necessarily mean that heads of schools lack leadership skills; rather, there is a need to establish empirically the extent to which the leadership skills they exercise influence school effectiveness. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to examine leadership generally or focus on particular aspects such as instructional leadership, resource management, or teacher motivation, leaving a contextual and empirical gap regarding the combined influence of different leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Rorya District. The lack of district-specific evidence makes it difficult for education authorities and school leaders to identify the leadership competencies requiring greater attention and professional development. This gap provides a justification for conducting the present study in Rorya District, Mara Region, Tanzania.

To address this problem, the proposed study will examine the influence of heads of schools' leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Rorya District. The study will specifically assess leadership skills related to communication, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, instructional supervision, and stakeholder engagement and determine how these skills influence indicators of school effectiveness, including teaching and learning, teacher performance, resource utilization, and achievement of school goals. The study is expected to generate empirical evidence that can assist the District Education Office, school heads, teachers, and other education stakeholders in identifying leadership skills that require strengthening. Based on the findings, appropriate measures such as continuous leadership professional development, mentoring and coaching of heads of schools, strengthened instructional supervision, participatory decision-making, improved communication mechanisms, and enhanced stakeholder collaboration can be promoted. Such measures could strengthen the capacity of heads of schools to manage schools effectively and ultimately contribute to improved teaching and learning and overall school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Rorya District.

Studies on school heads' leadership skills indicate that effective leadership is a key determinant of school effectiveness, teacher performance, and students' academic outcomes. In Japan, Yokota (2024) found that leadership development among school principals was influenced by challenges related to limited autonomy, inconsistent professional learning opportunities, and weak differentiation of leadership programmes. The study emphasized the importance of coherent and continuous leadership development strategies to strengthen principals' capacity. Similarly, Noreen et al.

(2020) established that principals' leadership styles significantly contributed to school improvement by promoting effective management and shared leadership practices. However, these studies were limited by their reliance on specific contexts and relatively small samples, suggesting the need for broader investigations using mixed research approaches.

Evidence from Malaysia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Kenya further demonstrates the influence of school leadership on educational outcomes. Zakaria et al. (2021) found that principals' strategic leadership had a significant positive relationship with students' academic achievement, co-curricular performance, and personality development. In Nigeria, Owaduge (2024) revealed that inclusive leadership practices, clear instructional vision, and administrative support enhanced teacher effectiveness, while Chafa and Ncube (2025) showed that effective educational leadership promoted school innovation, collaboration, and positive school culture. Similarly, Mulongo and Jemutai (2024) reported a strong positive relationship between school heads' leadership styles and teacher performance in Kenyan secondary schools. Nevertheless, these studies were mainly conducted within specific regions, limiting the generalization of findings to other educational contexts.

In Tanzania, studies have also highlighted the importance of school heads' leadership skills in improving educational outcomes. John and Mkulu (2020) found that democratic leadership practices positively influenced students' academic performance, whereas ineffective leadership approaches contributed to poor outcomes in public secondary schools in Rorya District. The study recommended strengthening leadership training programmes for school heads to enhance their capacity to manage schools effectively. Likewise, Mwitia (2025) revealed that managerial skills among heads of schools are essential for effective school management, although newly appointed heads often experience challenges due to inadequate leadership preparation and limited formal training. These findings demonstrate that leadership competencies are central to successful school administration and improved educational performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative-dominant mixed-methods approach using an explanatory research design to examine the influence of heads of schools' leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Rorya District, Mara Region, Tanzania. The study involved a target population of 919 participants, from which a sample of 112 respondents was selected, comprising one District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), five Ward Education Officers (WEOs), five heads of schools, and 96 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select the DSEO,

WEOs, and heads of schools based on their responsibilities and knowledge of school leadership, while stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select teachers. Quantitative data were collected from teachers using two structured questionnaires, namely the Head of School Leadership Skills Questionnaire (HLSLQ) and School Effectiveness Questionnaire (SEQ), while qualitative data were collected from the DSEO, WEOs, and heads of schools through semi-structured interviews. The HLSLQ measured leadership skills including communication, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, instructional supervision, and stakeholder engagement, whereas the SEQ measured indicators of school effectiveness. The validity of the instruments was established through expert review, while pilot testing was conducted to identify unclear or ambiguous items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and an overall coefficient of approximately 0.90 indicated high internal consistency. Data collection was conducted after obtaining permission from relevant authorities, and participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before providing informed consent.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and describe heads of schools' leadership skills and school effectiveness, while appropriate inferential statistics were used to determine the influence of leadership skills on school effectiveness. Qualitative interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes that explained and complemented the quantitative findings. The integration of the two forms of data enabled the study to establish measurable patterns while also obtaining detailed explanations of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding leadership practices and school effectiveness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021). Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and the right to withdraw from the study without penalty. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, while authorization to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational and institutional authorities. These procedures enhanced the credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity of the study (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper examined the influence of heads of schools' leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools. The researcher sought to obtain information from teachers, school heads, Ward

Education Officers (WEOs), and District Education Officers (DEOs) on how leadership skills contribute to school effectiveness. Information presented in this section was collected from teachers through questionnaires, in which they were required to indicate their level of agreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Furthermore, heads of schools, WEOs, and DEOs responded to interview questions that provided detailed understandings into leadership practices and their influence on school effectiveness. The information gathered from these respondents enabled the researcher to assess the extent to which heads of schools' leadership skills contribute to effective school management, improved teaching and learning processes, staff performance, and the overall achievement of school goals. To explore detailed information, the researcher focused on three key aspects: understanding leadership skills, the use of different leadership skills by heads of schools, the most commonly used leadership skills, and the influence of these leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools. Information was collected from teachers via questionnaires to assess their perceptions of the leadership skills demonstrated by school heads and how these skills contribute to the effectiveness of their schools.

Understanding of Leadership Skills

The researcher was interested in whether school heads use various forms of leadership in their respective secondary schools. The following were the responses demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Understanding of Leadership Skills (n=96)

Statements	Frequency	Percentage
Leadership skills mean the ability to guide and influence others to achieve goals.	20	20.8
They include clear communication between leaders and staff.	18	18.8
They involve making good decisions in school management.	19	19.8
They require teamwork and stakeholder cooperation.	21	21.9
They include solving problems and adapting to changes.	18	18.7
Total	96	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 1 show respondents' understanding of leadership skills in public secondary schools, where 21 (21.9%) indicated that leadership skills require teamwork and cooperation with stakeholders, while 20 (20.8%) stated that leadership involves the ability to guide and influence others to achieve goals. These results show that respondents strongly associate leadership with collaboration and influence in achieving school objectives. This understanding is supported by transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes collaboration, shared vision, and the motivation of followers toward common goals. This is consistent with the findings of Zakaria et al. (2021) in Malaysia, who found that principals' strategic leadership significantly improves students' academic and co-curricular outcomes through collaboration and shared vision. Similarly, Owaduge (2024) in Nigeria reported that inclusive leadership practices and administrative support enhance teacher effectiveness through cooperation and teamwork. In addition, John and Mkulu (2020) in Tanzania found that democratic leadership, which encourages participation and shared decision-making, positively influences students' academic performance. These studies collectively suggest that leadership in schools is most effective when it is participatory, collaborative, and focused on influencing others toward shared educational goals, which aligns with the respondents' views in this study.

In addition, 19 (19.8%) of respondents indicated that leadership skills involve making good decisions in school management. Furthermore, 18 (18.8%) reported that leadership skills include clear communication between leaders and staff, while another 18 (18.7%) emphasized that leadership involves solving problems and adapting to change. These findings show that respondents recognize several important components of leadership, including decision-making, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability, which are essential for effective school administration. This is further supported by interview responses from one of the interviewees, who emphasized that:

Effective school leadership depends on timely decision-making, open communication, and the ability to respond to challenges in the school environment. Also, a good leader must make clear decisions, communicate with teachers, and solve problems quickly to keep the school running smoothly (Interviewee H2, April 2026).

This implies that leadership skills are not only theoretical but also put into practice in daily school management, where heads of schools are expected to respond to academic, disciplinary, and administrative challenges. Also, the response shows that heads of schools who demonstrate strong decision-making,

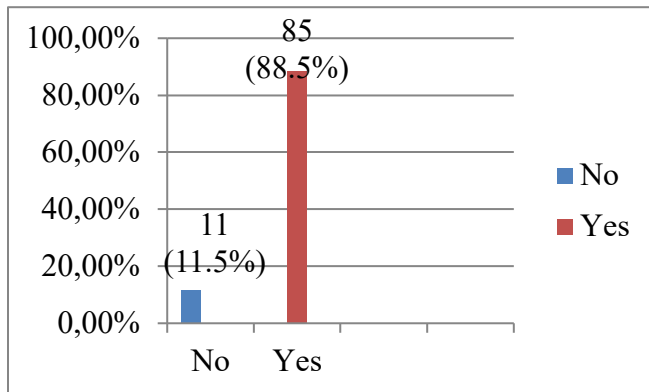
communication, problem-solving, and adaptability are more likely to improve school efficiency and performance. These skills help create a stable, well-coordinated school environment that supports teacher effectiveness and enhances overall school effectiveness in public secondary schools. This is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes that effective school leaders actively guide, motivate, and solve real school problems to improve performance. Similarly, John and Mkulu (2020) found that effective leadership styles improve students' academic performance through active involvement in school management, while Owaduge (2024) reported that inclusive leadership enhances teacher effectiveness through collaboration and problem-solving. In addition, Zakaria et al. (2021) showed that strategic leadership improves student outcomes through practical leadership actions. Overall, these studies suggest that decision-making, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability enable heads of schools to improve efficiency and overall school effectiveness.

Overall, the results suggest that respondents have a balanced and comprehensive understanding of leadership skills, as all 96 respondents were distributed across the five statements. The close percentages indicate that leadership is viewed as a combination of interrelated skills, including teamwork, communication, decision-making, and adaptability, all of which are essential for effective school performance. Teachers further described leadership as the ability to plan, organize, and supervise school activities systematically to ensure smooth academic and administrative operations. This managerial view emphasizes resource allocation, scheduling, and performance monitoring to efficiently achieve school goals. This perspective is supported by Zakaria et al. (2021), who found that principals' strategic leadership significantly improves students' academic and co-curricular outcomes, and by Saga (2025), who showed that strong governance and systematic management enhance organizational commitment and educational quality. Similarly, Mwita (2025) noted that technical proficiency in planning and adherence to administrative procedures ensure smooth school operations and prevent mismanagement. Overall, the evidence shows that effective leadership skills in planning, supervision, and organization are essential for improving school effectiveness and academic success.

Head of Schools' Use of Different Leadership Skills

This section presents findings on the use of various leadership skills by heads of public secondary schools. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which school heads apply various leadership skills in managing school activities and promoting school effectiveness. Teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of the leadership skills demonstrated by

their heads of school. The findings obtained from teachers are presented in Figure1.



Source: Field Data (2026)

Figure 1. Head of Schools Use of Different Leadership Skills (n=96)

Figure 1 presents data on heads of schools' use of different leadership skills. The findings show that a large majority of respondents, 85 (88.5%), indicated "Yes," meaning that heads of schools use different leadership skills in managing and leading schools. In comparison, only 11 (11.5%) indicated "No," suggesting that a small proportion perceives limited or inadequate use of leadership skills. This implies that most heads of schools understand and apply various leadership approaches such as communication, instructional leadership, participative leadership, and problem-solving skills in their daily school administration, which are essential for improving school performance and staff coordination. During the interview, one interviewee claimed that:

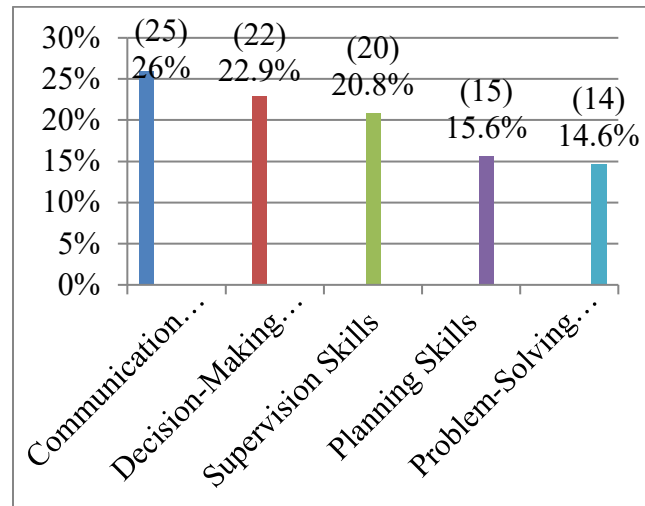
In my daily leadership practices, I apply different leadership skills depending on the situation. For example, I use participatory leadership when involving teachers in decision-making, instructional leadership when supervising teaching and learning processes, and communication skills when addressing staff and students. These skills help me to maintain discipline, improve collaboration, and ensure the smooth running of school activities. However, at times, limited resources and time constraints make it difficult to apply all skills effectively (Interviewee H1, May 2026).

This response suggests that leadership practice is situational and depends on school needs and available conditions. This is supported by Owaduge (2024), who found that inclusive leadership practices, instructional vision, and administrative support significantly enhance teacher effectiveness in public secondary schools. In

line with the Transformational Leadership Theory, these findings imply that heads of schools who adopt inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and supportive leadership behaviors are more likely to respond effectively to varying school conditions. This assertion is strongly reinforced by Zakaria et al. (2021), who demonstrated that high-level strategic and visionary leadership directly drives student academic and co-curricular success. Similarly, John and Mkulu (2020) demonstrated that while passive, laissez-faire leadership leads to poor outcomes, active democratic and transformational engagement significantly boosts student performance. Therefore, strengthening leadership training and continuous professional development can enhance transformational leadership competencies among school heads, thereby improving school management and academic performance.

Most Used Leadership Skills

Teachers were also given a question to indicate the most commonly used leadership skills by heads of schools. Their responses are presented in Figure 2.



Source: Field Data (2026)

Figure 2. Most Used Leadership Skills(n=96)

Figure 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the most commonly used leadership skills among heads of schools, expressed in both frequencies and percentages. The results indicate that communication skills are the most frequently used leadership skill, with 25 (26%) of the total. This suggests that school leaders place strong emphasis on communication as a core leadership function, particularly in ensuring that instructions, policies, and expectations are clearly conveyed to teachers and other stakeholders. The prominence of communication also reflects its central role in coordinating school activities and maintaining effective information flow within the school environment. This is supported by John and Mkulu (2020), who stated that effective communication between school heads

and teachers enhances coordination and improves students' academic performance by ensuring clear instructions and strong teamwork within schools. Similarly, Zakaria et al. (2021) stated that principals' strategic leadership, which relies heavily on effective communication, improves student outcomes by fostering a shared vision and aligning school goals among teachers and learners. Likewise, Owaduge (2024) stated that inclusive leadership practices characterized by clear communication strengthen teacher effectiveness by promoting collaboration, reducing misunderstandings, and improving instructional delivery.

Decision-making skills had 22 respondents, which equals 22.9%, followed closely by supervision skills with 20 (20.8%). This pattern shows that heads of schools are also actively engaged in making administrative and instructional decisions and in monitoring teaching and learning processes. The relatively high proportion of supervision skills indicates that school leaders are not only involved in planning but also in ensuring that set standards and procedures are implemented effectively. Together, these three skills, communication, decision-making, and supervision, form the core operational leadership functions that directly influence school performance and management efficiency. Moreover, one of the respondents showed that:

Decision-making is crucial for managing both academic and administrative issues at our school. I always try to make timely and fair decisions, especially in discipline cases, resource allocation, and staff coordination, because this helps the school run smoothly without confusion or delays. At the same time, supervision is part of my daily routine. I regularly visit classrooms, review lesson plans, and assess students' academic progress to ensure teachers are meeting the required standards. Through this close monitoring, we can identify challenges early and improve the quality of teaching and learning (Interviewee H5, April 2026).

This indicates that effective decision-making and supervision enhance accountability, strengthen instructional quality, and improve overall school performance and management efficiency. This is supported by Mulongo and Jemutai (2024), who found that effective leadership decision-making and continuous supervision significantly improve teacher performance by enhancing accountability and ensuring adherence to instructional standards in secondary schools. Similarly, Mwita (2025) reported that heads of schools who consistently engage in supervision and timely decision-making strengthen school management efficiency and improve the quality of teaching and learning by better coordinating and monitoring staff

activities. These findings are further explained by Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that effective leaders influence performance by providing direction, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support through participatory decision-making and active supervision, thereby enhancing accountability, instructional quality, and overall school effectiveness.

On the lower end of the distribution, planning skills account for 15 (15.6%), while problem-solving skills are the least frequently reported at 14 (14.6%). This suggests that although planning and problem-solving are recognized as important leadership competencies, they are comparatively less emphasized in day-to-day leadership practices. The lower percentages may imply that these functions are either delegated or integrated within other leadership activities such as decision-making and supervision. Overall, the figure highlights a leadership profile that is more operational and communication-driven, with relatively less emphasis on strategic planning and structured problem-solving. This finding is supported by Chafa and Ncube (2025), who found that while school leaders actively engage in communication, collaboration, and supervision to drive school improvement, strategic functions such as planning and structured problem-solving are often less visible in daily leadership practices and are sometimes integrated into broader decision-making processes. Similarly, Mwita (2025) reported that heads of schools tend to focus more on operational management and routine administrative duties, with planning and problem-solving frequently being constrained by limited training and therefore often handled indirectly through experience-based decisions and delegated responsibilities.

The Influence of Heads of Schools' Leadership Skills on School Effectiveness

This section presents findings on the influence of heads of schools' leadership skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools. The analysis is based on Likert-scale responses from teachers, in which respondents rated their level of agreement with statements related to leadership practices. The results are summarized using frequency and percentage to show respondents' general perceptions of how the leadership skills of school heads contribute to school effectiveness. The use of a Likert scale was appropriate because it enabled the study to capture the degree of agreement or disagreement among teachers regarding different leadership dimensions in a structured, measurable way. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' Responses on the Influence of Heads of Schools' Leadership Skills on School Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools (n=96)

Statement	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%

The head of school's decision on both teachers and students is democratic	6	6.3	7	7.3	5	5.2	4	45.8	3	35.4
The head of school does not seek collaboration when talking about important issues regarding the leadership styles	2	29.8	2	26.5	8	8.3	2	21.9	1	13.5
The head of school always demonstrates a laissez-faire attitude when issues arise in the school	1	15.6	1	12.5	1	12.5	3	34.4	2	24.3
The head of the school allows team members to make decisions about their tasks	3	3.1	6	6.3	4	4.2	4	41.7	4	44.3
The head of the school directs and controls most activities without input from his team	2	27.6	2	20.8	9	9.4	2	29.8	1	13.5
The head of the school gives directives on the subject matters	4	4.2	2	2.1	7	7.3	5	54.2	3	32.1

Source: Field Data (2026)

The head of school's decision on both teachers and students is democratic

Table 2 shows that teachers largely agreed that school heads make democratic decisions regarding both teachers and students. Specifically, 6(6.3%) strongly disagreed, 7(7.3%) disagreed, 5(5.2%) were undecided, 44(45.8%) agreed, and 34(35.4%) strongly agreed. These results indicate that democratic leadership is widely practiced in most public secondary schools. The implication is that participatory decision-making enhances collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility, which improves school effectiveness. One head of school explained that democratic leadership strengthens teamwork and commitment. One of the respondents commented that:

In my school, I ensure that teachers are part of decision-making processes, especially on academic planning and discipline matters. This involvement helps them feel responsible for outcomes and reduces resistance when implementing school decisions (Interviewee H2, April 2026).

The response implies that involving teachers in decision-making promotes ownership, accountability, and commitment to school decisions. When teachers participate in academic planning and disciplinary matters, resistance to implementation is reduced and cooperation is enhanced, ultimately improving school effectiveness and ensuring the smooth execution of school policies and academic programs. This finding is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes shared decision-making, empowerment, and collective responsibility, in which leaders actively involve teachers in school processes to enhance commitment, motivation, and ownership of decisions. By engaging teachers in academic planning and disciplinary matters, heads of schools reduce resistance to change and strengthen teamwork and accountability within the school environment.

This is strongly corroborated by Owaduge (2024), who demonstrated that inclusive leadership practices and shared administrative support significantly maximize teacher effectiveness by ensuring that staff are active stakeholders in the school's instructional vision. Similarly, Chafa and Ncube (2025) observed that when school heads deliberately foster a positive institutional culture rooted in collaboration and shared decision-making, it minimizes friction and drives meaningful school change and innovation, even in challenging rural environments. These dynamics are further mirrored by Zakaria et al. (2021), who found that participatory leadership has a significant positive influence on students' academic achievement and overall school outcomes, as it improves coordination, enhances implementation of school programs, and promotes a

shared vision among staff, ultimately leading to improved school effectiveness.

The head of school collaborates when talking about the leadership styles

Table 2 shows mixed responses regarding leadership collaboration. Results indicate that 28(29.2%) strongly disagreed, 25(26.0%) disagreed, 8(8.3%) were undecided, 21(21.9%) agreed, and 13(13.5%) strongly agreed that heads of schools do not seek collaboration in leadership issues. These findings suggest inconsistency in collaborative leadership practices across schools. The implication is that limited collaboration may weaken teamwork, reduce shared ownership, and affect school effectiveness. One of the respondents noted that:

Some school heads actively involve teachers in discussions before making decisions, while others make decisions independently. In schools where collaboration is practiced, we observe better coordination, improved discipline, and higher teacher motivation (Interviewee W1, May 2026).

This implies that collaboration in decision-making is a key determinant of school effectiveness. Where heads of schools involve teachers in discussions, there is improved coordination, stronger discipline, and higher teacher motivation, which enhance teamwork and smooth implementation of school activities. Conversely, a lack of collaboration may lead to poor communication, reduced teacher morale, and lower efficiency in school management. This dynamic is clearly illustrated by Mwita (2025) in the local context, who observed that when newly appointed school heads fail to practice collaborative leadership due to a lack of training, this frequently leads to institutional friction, teacher indiscipline, and outright mismanagement. Furthermore, Noureen et al. (2020) demonstrated that secondary school heads who purposefully share leadership responsibilities and bridge communication gaps with their faculty see substantial progress in school improvement, whereas isolated leadership strictly limits organizational performance. These risks and benefits are supported by Owaduge (2024), who found that inclusive leadership improves teacher effectiveness, consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory's emphasis on teamwork and a shared vision.

The head of the school always demonstrates a laissez-faire attitude.

Table 2 indicates that 15(15.6%) strongly disagreed, 12(12.5%) disagreed, 12(12.5%) were undecided, 33(34.4%) agreed, and 23(24.0%) strongly agreed that heads of schools demonstrate laissez-faire behaviour when issues arise. These findings show that a

considerable number of respondents perceive passive leadership in some schools. The implication is that laissez-faire leadership may delay decision-making, weaken supervision, and negatively affect school performance. Also, one interviewee explained that workload challenges may lead to weak supervision. The response shows that:

In some cases, heads of schools delegate responsibilities without adequate follow-up due to heavy administrative duties. This creates gaps in monitoring school activities, which can affect discipline and overall coordination. As a result, some delegated tasks may not be effectively implemented, leading to inconsistencies in school performance and accountability (D1, May 2026).

This indicated that while delegation is an important leadership practice, inadequate follow-up can weaken supervision, reduce accountability, and create gaps in coordination. This may negatively affect discipline, task consistency, and overall school performance, underscoring the need for balanced delegation and continuous monitoring by school heads. This aligns with John and Mkulu (2020), who found that laissez-faire leadership negatively affects academic performance and contradicts Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes active leadership involvement. Similarly, Owaduge (2024) emphasizes that sustained administrative support and effective supervision are essential for enhancing teacher effectiveness and ensuring smooth implementation of instructional activities in schools.

The head of the school allows team members to make decisions about their tasks.

Table 2 shows that 3 (3.1%) strongly disagreed, 6 (6.3%) disagreed, 4 (4.2%) were undecided, 40 (41.7%) agreed, and 43 (44.8%) strongly agreed that heads of schools allow team members to make decisions about their tasks. These results indicate strong teacher involvement in decision-making. The implication is that teacher empowerment enhances ownership, motivation, and efficiency in school activities. One interviewee asserted that:

Teachers in my school are given autonomy to decide how they execute their classroom tasks because they understand their learners better. This flexibility enhances creativity, accountability, and commitment to delivering quality education, as teachers can adapt teaching strategies to learners' needs and classroom contexts, leading to more effective learning outcomes (Interviewee H4, April 2026).

This shows that teacher autonomy in classroom decision-making enhances creativity, accountability, and commitment, thereby improving teaching quality and fostering better learner engagement. When teachers are trusted to make instructional decisions, they are more likely to adapt methods that suit learners' needs, leading to improved learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness. This finding is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes empowerment and individualized consideration, in which leaders support followers' professional growth by granting them autonomy and trust in performing their duties.

This perspective is highly consistent with the findings of Owaduge (2024), who demonstrated that providing sustained administrative support and honoring a teacher's instructional autonomy inside the classroom significantly enhances overall instructional quality and teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, Muliati et al. (2022) observed that successful School-Based Management (SBM) relies on empowering local educators, noting that when school heads continuously add value to internal inputs, such as granting teachers the latitude to innovate pedagogically, this directly yields superior educational outcomes and better learner engagement. Similarly, Mwita (2025) found that the delegation of responsibilities by school heads enhances effective school management by building teachers' competence, motivation, and ownership of school tasks, thereby improving school performance.

The head of the school directs and controls most activities without input from his team.

Table 2 indicates that 26(27.1%) strongly disagreed, 20(20.8%) disagreed, 9(9.4%) were undecided, 28(29.2%) agreed, and 13(13.5%) strongly agreed that heads of schools direct and control most activities without input from their teams. These mixed results suggest that some schools still experience centralized leadership. The implication is that excessive control may reduce teacher participation and limit innovation. The interviewees' responses explained that centralized leadership is sometimes used to maintain discipline. One of the respondents demonstrated that:

Some school heads prefer to make decisions alone to ensure strict compliance with regulations. However, when teachers are excluded, it may reduce their motivation and limit their contribution to school development. This can also weaken teamwork and reduce staff's sense of shared responsibility, ultimately affecting overall school effectiveness (Interviewee W3, May 2026).

This suggests that excessive centralization of decision-making by school heads may negatively affect teacher motivation, participation, and ownership of school

activities. When teachers are excluded from key decisions, it can reduce teamwork, weaken collaboration, and limit their contribution to school development, ultimately affecting overall school effectiveness and performance. This finding is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes shared decision-making, empowerment, and collective responsibility, where leaders involve teachers in organizational processes to enhance commitment and motivation. This argument is strongly reinforced by Yokota (2024), who observed that top-down, overly centralized governance frameworks that severely restrict autonomy over local personnel and finances often leave school administrators and educators disconnected, ultimately stalling meaningful institutional reforms and lowering morale. In the local context, Mwanawima et al. (2025) noted that a rigid, non-collaborative approach from leadership breaks down vital communication channels and leaves the school vulnerable to internal friction. In contrast, decentralized, open environments promote dialogue and help maintain a disciplined, high-performing learning atmosphere. Similarly, Owaduge (2024) found that inclusive leadership practices and administrative support significantly improve teacher effectiveness, while over-centralized leadership tends to reduce participation and weaken instructional quality in schools.

The head of the school gives directives on the subject matters.

Table 2 shows that 4 (4.2%) strongly disagreed, 2 (2.1%) disagreed, 7 (7.3%) were undecided, 52 (54.2%) agreed, and 31 (32.3%) strongly agreed that heads of schools issue directives on subject matters. These results indicate strong instructional leadership practices. The implication is that clear guidance enhances teaching effectiveness, curriculum coverage, and student achievement. In addition, the interview shows that:

Heads of schools regularly provide instructional guidance to teachers, especially on syllabus coverage and examination preparation. This supervision ensures consistency in teaching and improves students' academic performance across schools by helping teachers stay aligned with curriculum requirements and maintaining uniform standards in lesson delivery and assessment practices (Interviewee D1, May 2026).

This reveals that consistent instructional supervision by school heads strengthens teaching quality, ensures proper syllabus coverage, and promotes uniformity in lesson delivery. This ultimately enhances students' academic performance by improving coordination,

accountability, and adherence to curriculum standards across schools. This finding is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation, where leaders guide and support teachers to improve instructional practices and achieve shared academic goals. Similarly, Zakaria et al. (2021) found that strategic and instructional leadership by principals has a significant positive influence on students' academic achievement and overall school outcomes through effective guidance, monitoring, and support of teaching and learning processes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that heads of schools' leadership skills have a significant influence on school effectiveness in public secondary schools. The findings revealed that effective leadership is demonstrated through teamwork, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, supervision, and stakeholder involvement. Most heads of schools apply different leadership skills, particularly communication, democratic decision-making, instructional supervision, and teacher empowerment, which contribute to improved coordination, teacher motivation, teaching quality, and achievement of school goals. However, some challenges were identified, including limited collaboration in decision-making, excessive centralized control, and elements of laissez-faire leadership that may negatively affect accountability and school performance. Therefore, effective, participatory, and supportive leadership practices are essential for creating a positive school environment and enhancing overall school effectiveness.

Recommendation

The study recommends that education authorities should strengthen continuous professional development programmes for heads of schools to improve their leadership competencies, particularly in collaborative decision-making, strategic planning, problem-solving, and instructional supervision. School heads should adopt participatory leadership approaches that involve teachers in decision-making, encourage teamwork, and promote shared responsibility in school management. Additionally, heads of schools should balance delegation with effective follow-up mechanisms to ensure accountability, improve teacher commitment, and enhance teaching and learning outcomes in public secondary schools.

REFERENCES

- Ategwu P O, Kenn-Aklah F U, & Fanan A G. (2023) principal direct supervision and Teaching effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ikom education zone ,Cross River state ,Nigeria, *African journal of studies in education* 8(1)
- Chacha, M., & Tangi, F. (2023). Challenges facing stakeholders' participation in improving teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Rorya District, Mara, Tanzania. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*, 5(6), 30–36.
- Chafa, A., & Ncube, F. (2025). The impact of educational leadership on school change and innovation. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(1), 1–10.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dabesa, F., & Cheramlak, S. F. (2021). School leadership effectiveness and students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Guraghe Zone SNNPR. *Middle Eastern Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 1–26.
- Fleming, J., & Zegwaard, K. E. (2018). Methodologies, methods and ethical considerations for conducting research in work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), 205–213.
- Godwin, M., & Kabeta, R. M. (2019). The effects of head teachers' leadership styles on the teacher performance in selected mission and public secondary schools of Muchinga Province-Zambia. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*, 6(9), 158–165.
- Ismail, M., Khatibi, A., & Azam, S. F. (2022). Impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in Maldives. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(2), 261–279.
- Jerab, D. (2024). The impact of communication on organizational performance: A comprehensive analysis. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1–24.
- John, U., & Mkulu, D. G. (2020). Influence of school heads' leadership styles on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nyamagana District, Mwanza, Tanzania. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 5(6), 2327–2340.
- Kayombo, V. B., Matete, R. E., & Suru, M. H. (2026). Transformational leadership and its influence on pupils' academic achievement in primary schools in Tanzania. *Educational Dimension*, 14, 17–32.
- Korejan, M. M., & Shahbazi, H. (2016). An analysis of transformational leadership theory. *Journal of Fundamental and Applied Sciences*, 8(3), 452–461.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2025). *Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30*. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

- Mkulu D G & Ategwu P O. (2024), Innovative leadership as determinant of enhancing transformation of quality education in higher institution in mwanza Tanzania, *Fou journal of educational research* 5(2) 310-317
- Muliati, A., Sihotang, W., & Octaviany, R. A. (2022). Effectiveness of school resources management in improving the quality of education. *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(5), 901–916.
- Mulongo, W. E., & Jemutai, E. M. (2024). Influence of school heads' leadership styles on teacher performance in secondary schools in Lamu County, Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 2(3), 364–379.
- Murugi, R. M., & Mugwe, M. (2023). Stakeholders' involvement and school leadership for effective implementation of strategic planning. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 7(2), 277–286.
- Mwanawima, E., Mhando, S. F., & Ambakisye, S. K. (2025). Enhancing community engagement in conflict resolution among secondary school students in Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Tanzania. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 6(4), 965–975.
- Mwita, M. S. (2025). Head of schools' managerial skills towards effective school management in public secondary schools in Tanzania. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 6(8), 2225–2234.
- Noureen, M., Shah, N. H., & Zamir, S. (2020). Effect of leadership styles of secondary school heads on school improvement. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 5(1), 519–527.
- Nyaibuli, B., & Mwila, P. M. (2024). Impact of school head leadership style in enhancing teachers' work performance in public secondary schools: A case of Ilala City, Tanzania. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(3s), 4931–4937.
- Owaduge, S. B. (2024). Influence of school leadership on teacher effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akure North, Ondo State [Seminar]. National Open University of Nigeria.
- Saga, J. G. (2025). A structural model on school management effectiveness. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(3), 3303–3313.
- Shrestha, M. (2020). Transformational leadership and its dimensions: Contributions in organizational change among schools. *BSSS Journal of Management*, 11(1), 112–130.
- Steinmann, B., Klug, H. J., & Maier, G. W. (2018). The path is the goal: How transformational leaders enhance followers' job attitudes and proactive behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2338.
- Suryadi, Y., Dewi, N. L. Y., Trisnawati, T., & Al-Amin, A. A. (2024). The impact of transformational leadership on organizational performance and employee motivation. *Transforma Jurnal Manajemen*, 2(2), 108–119.
- Toikka, T., & Tarnanen, M. (2025). School development through team learning: Exploring the potential of teams in a learning community. *The Learning Organization*, 32(7), 1365–1394.
- Wanjuan, Z., & Muyunda, G. (2023). School leadership in Zambia: A systematic literature review. *Education & Youth Research*, 3(2), 87–101.
- Yokota, H. (2024). School leadership development practices in Japan. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27(6), 1365–1394.
- Zakaria, I. B., Nor, M. Y. B. M., Alias, B. S. B., & Hamid, A. H. (2021). The influence of principals' strategic leadership on students' outcome. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 407–417.