Examining the Factors that Influence the School Leadership Practices in Senior High School Teachers at the Tano North District, Ghana

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author TGN designed the study and performed statistical analysis while author IA wrote the first draft of the manuscript, reviewed the literature and managed data analysis. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Leadership practices of school heads can positively or negatively affect learning outcomes and ultimately the educational goals of the country. Understanding the influence factors of leadership practices is fundamental to school improvement. The main aim of this article was to present factors that influence the leadership practices of heads of schools. Using public senior high school teachers and heads in the Tano North District in the Ahafo Region of Ghana as the target population, 158 of them including 154 teachers and 4 headmasters from all 4 schools in the District were selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using the authors' self-developed questionnaire after pilot-testing for its refinement. The content and construct validity of the instruments were reviewed and validated by experts in the authors" institutions. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to analyse the data. The content and construct

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validity of the instruments were reviewed and validated by experts in the authors' institutions. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to analyze the data. The study found that communication, intelligence and inclusive approach are factors that influence school leadership practices. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend the Ghana Education Service through the Ministry of Education organise periodic leadership training for heads of senior high schools to equip them with appropriate and innovative leadership practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is concerned with the provision of direction and control to attain a shared goal. Ololube [1] defined leadership as a process and form of service delivery that aims at achieving specific goals through the use of human and material resources as well as maintaining a cohesive and coherent institution. Northouse [2] described leadership as a process whereby a person influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Ghansah, [3] citing Ohio State Leadership Studies sees the concept of leadership in two dimensions namely task orientation and relationship orientation. Task-oriented school leaders are concerned with achieving the goals of the school by whatever means, the relationship-oriented leaders primarily focus on meeting the needs of their teachers, learners, and other staff members. A blend of the two leadership types led to the identification of four leadership styles. The first school of thought places a high premium on both aspects of leadership (Ohio State Leadership Studies, cited in [3]. The second style puts a high premium on building relationships and less interest in the task. In the third style, leaders put more value on task orientation than relationship orientation relationship. By and large, the school teacher does not value both dimensions and focuses on administration and less on academics is the fourth leadership. Leadership helps provide direction, administering and controlling others in other to achieve shared goals [4]. Leadership has generally been seen as the soul of an organization. The head of the school is expected to create an environment favorable to teachers and learners through different practices [3], Again, they're expected to manage staff and funds geared towards achieving school goals. Senior high school development requires experienced decision-makers who should be professional and skilled to lead schools through the achievement of their goals. Leadership, whichever model it embraces, has a central goal to ensure and maintain school empowerment which has to do with the quality of teaching; the

most influential factor in learners' achievement [5]. The authors further outlined key functions of schools as structuring a specific vision and giving directions, providing teachers with strong motivation to improve their performance. Bimpeh [6] citing Price water house Coopers (PWC) also identified some key roles and responsibilities of school leaders. These include strategic direction, teaching, and learning, developing and managing people; networking and collaboration, and, operations and accountability.

School leadership requires support, guidance, and behaviors capable of changing the overall performance of the school. Leadership is an influential process that leads to the achievement of a desired goal. How influential a leader is in terms of driving the vision of the school is crucial as far as the achievement of targeted goals is concerned. It, therefore, implies that the ability of a school to meet its set goals lies in how influential, efficient, and effective a leader is in terms of implementing the vision. Thus, a leader of a school must have the authority to act in a way that will stimulate a positive response from his members of staff to effectively achieve the ultimate goal of the school. Leader of an institution, for the benefit of this study, the headmaster has some sources of power at his disposal to enable him to get things done [7]. What is crucial besides the possession of these powers is what the leader brings to the table. This brings to light certain practices which are indisputably critical to whoever has the ambition to assume a leadership role in every school. The role of secondary education Is quintessential in the development of every country. Failure to expand access at the senior high school level will undermine the achievement of the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Consequently, this led to the rapid establishment of community senior high schools across the country since independence but there exists a problem with many of these schools being staffed by inexperienced heads [8]. Despite various attempts to improve the quality of education delivery in schools, it appears that

issues regarding leadership in these schools remain a major problem.

Leaders use different strategies in encouraging and directing their followers [9]. Communication is one factor *that* correlates *with* leadership practices. Communication skill is an individual's ability to demonstrate knowledge about appropriate communication behavior in certain situations [10]. Without effective communication, staff does not know their responsibilities, and schools are unable to function effectively. Therefore, communication and leadership are inseparable from each other in the attainment of goals. This suggests that communication has a tremendous influence on the leadership practices of heads. Again, communication is essential for recipients to develop friendships and build trust and acceptance [11]. Leaders need to communicate effectively by considering the followers' interests and persuading them to follow their visions.

One demographic factor that influences the leadership practices of school heads is gender. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles that are seen as appropriate for both males and females by a given society. Studies show that followers' femininity has a relational orientation that influences leadership practices [12]. According to the authors, transformational leadership is not only achieved by leaders but can also be affected by their followers. Male and female leaders see leadership roles differently. Men perceive hierarchical and competitive behaviors as a more significant component of the leadership role. Whereas women perceive collaborative and consensus building as a key component of leadership [13]. Egly, Johannessen- Schmidt and Van Engen [14] revealed that female leaders were more transformational than male leaders in their leadership style. Woolley and Thomas [15] also investigated the relationship between a group's collective intelligence and the intelligence quotients of its members and found that gender had a positive impact.

Again, school heads may also be committed to equity and creating an inclusive work environment. This approach may influence the adoption of a particular leadership style. The leader welcomes everyone's contributions and embraces diversity and full engagement in decision-making. According to Yukl and Chavez [9], the most influential factors of leadership may include consultation and collaboration. A

potential impact of inclusive leadership can be found in the area of personnel, organization, and community levels. Heads who practice inclusivity appear to use transformational leadership. Inclusive leaders can treat staff with respect and recognition, and tolerance and listen to the opinions of their staff [16]. The creation of an inclusive environment usually concerns reflecting and examining all aspects of the school system.

Moreover, intelligence is an influential factor in leadership. School heads need to possess a high level of intelligence to lead teamwork, Emotional intelligence is increasingly being recognized as an important human factor in the workplace [17]. According to Carmeli [18], intelligence quotient (IQ) is second to emotional intelligence in determining job performance and leaders with high intelligence perform better than their counterparts who possess lower emotional intelligence. Leaders with high emotional intelligence scores are more likely to use a proactive leadership style than those with lower emotional intelligence [17]. The key objective of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the adoption of leadership practices of senior high school heads in the Tano North District.

1.1 Problem Statement

Most of the studies carried out in developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand among other countries, lack contextual specificity and relevance as most of their findings are on Eurocentric or Anglo-American theories, values, and beliefs [19]. Senior high school education constitutes a critical transition stage to the tertiary institution [20]. Ghanaian learners progressing to the tertiary level are required to attain grades 'A' 1 to C6 [21]. This suggests that school leadership is instrumental in the progression of learners. Some authors see leadership as the second most important school-based factor in school success [22]. However, several comments have been leveled against headmasters/mistresses by the general public about the deteriorating state of leadership in senior high schools in the country. For example, Bimpeh [6], who carried out a study on leadership factors influencing teachers" performance in the Volta Region of Ghana revealed mounting opinions of the public about ineffective and inefficient leadership practices of heads across the country. The adoption of ineffective and inefficient leadership may impede

learners' performance [23]. A curious mind may ask what factors account for the leadership practices of senior high school heads. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the factors that influence the school leadership practices of senior high school heads in the Tano North District.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

All the study respondents included all public senior high teachers and heads in the Tano North District of Ahafo Region. A quantitative approach and the descriptive survey design were adopted using a sample of 158 selected applying Yamane sampling calculation formulae (1967) as shown below. Of the 158, 154 were teachers and four (4) heads.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\propto)^2}$$

Where;
n is the sample size.
N is the sample frame.
$\propto$ is the margin of error at a 95% confidence interval.
The sample frame N for the study is 260.
$\propto$ = 0.05

$$n = \frac{260}{1 + 260(0.05)^2}$$
$$n = \frac{260}{1.65}$$

Hence, the sample size was 158.

The proportional sampling technique was employed to select the actual respondents as shown in Table 1. The researchers used questionnaires to gather data for the study. The researchers used a Likert scale of five (5) points, which requires respondents to respond to a series of statements in the questionnaire by indicating whether he/she strongly agrees (SA), (A) agrees or not certain (NC), or disagrees (DA), or strongly disagrees (SD). The research instrument was pre-tested before a full-scale survey was conducted. Expert validity views and suggestions were initially incorporated in the questionnaires and were administered in Gambaga Girls Senior High School in the North-East Region of the country. Cronbach's Alpha test indicated a value of 0.9, showing that the instruments were reliable. The validity of research instruments was ascertained by discussing questionnaires with research colleagues (face validity) and seasoned educationists (content validity). The questionnaire was self-constructed and administered to all sampled study respondents. Items were structured in the form of single-choice, closed-ended questions based on the research objective. There were two sections in the teachers' and heads' questionnaires. Section A covered issues on the demographic data of respondents, while section B dealt with issues on the factors that influence leadership practices. Before the researchers engaged in the collection of data, a permission letter to conduct the study in the schools was given to the researchers by the District Director of Education, Tano North. Data were collected from February 2022 to March 2022. The administration of the questionnaires was by direct contact with the respondents and the completed questionnaires was returned for editing, coding, and entering into the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) spreadsheet for analysis. The researchers applied SPSS version 25 for Windows to analyze the gathered data. With this package, the researchers made use of descriptive statistics, notably, frequency and percentage.

From Table 2, the respondents consisted of 4 heads and 154 teachers representing 3% and 97% respectively. Table 2 also shows that the respondents comprised 87% male and 18% female school teachers. The information

Table 1. Sample distribution of respondents

	School	Teachers & Heads	
		Population	Sample
1	Bomaa Senior High School	41	25
2	Serwaa Kesse Girls' Senior High School	83	50
3	Yamfo Anglican Senior High School	59	36
4	Boakye Tromo Senior High School	77	47
	Total	**260**	**158**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2. Demographic data of respondents

Category	Number	Percentage
Type		
Headmaster	4	3
Teacher	154	97
Gender		
Male	130	82
Female	28	18
Rank		
Principal Superintendent	108	68
Assistant Director II	38	24
Assistant Director I above	12	8
Academic qualification		
Master's Degree	20	13
Bachelor's Degree	138	87
Diploma	0	0
Total	**158**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2022

presented in Table 2 also revealed that 68% of the teachers had attained the rank of principal superintendent, 24% had assistant director II, and 8% attained assistant director I or deputy director rank. Regarding academic qualifications, 87% of the teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 13 % had a second degree. The information suggests that the majority of the teachers held a first-degree qualification which is now the prerequisite qualification at that level.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analyzed to reflect the research objective of the study. The findings in Fig. 1 indicated that all the respondents representing 100%, strongly agreed with the statement that interpersonal communication influences the leadership practices of heads. The institutional climate is important because it influences both the quality of work and the quality of the work life

of members [24]. Members of an effective institution communicate freely with one another. Communication and interpersonal relationship influences the leadership practices of heads and is not deniable because the whole essence of organizational leadership is to handle various personalities in the organization [25].

Again, from Fig. 2, 100% representing all the respondents disagreed with the statement that followers' gender influences the adoption of leadership practice in schools. These findings contradict an earlier study carried out by Howell and Shamir [12]. In their study, it was revealed that female followers are likely to form a charismatic relationship with the leader that would enhance transformational leadership. The findings also contradict a study conducted by Powell and Butterfield [26] who stated that there is a significant difference between male and female decision-making skill
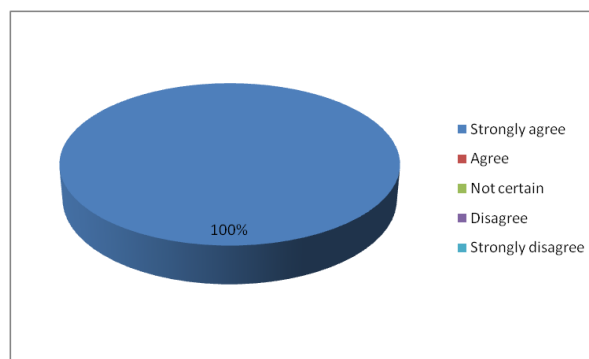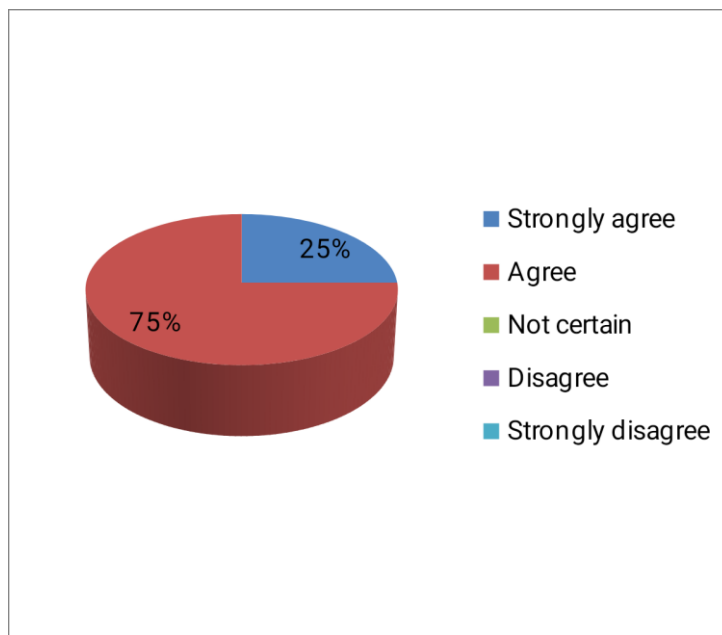

Fig. 1. Shows responses on whether Interpersonal communication influences the leadership practices of senior high school heads
Source: Field Survey, 2022
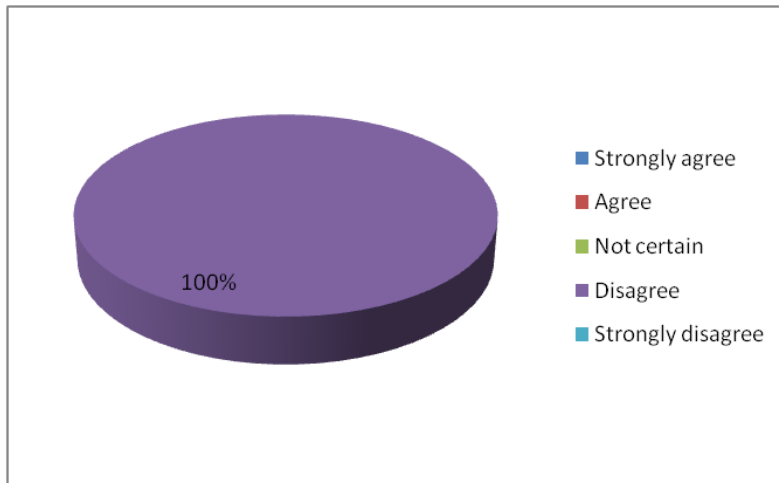
Fig. 2. Shows the responses of respondents on whether gender influences the leadership practices of senior high school heads
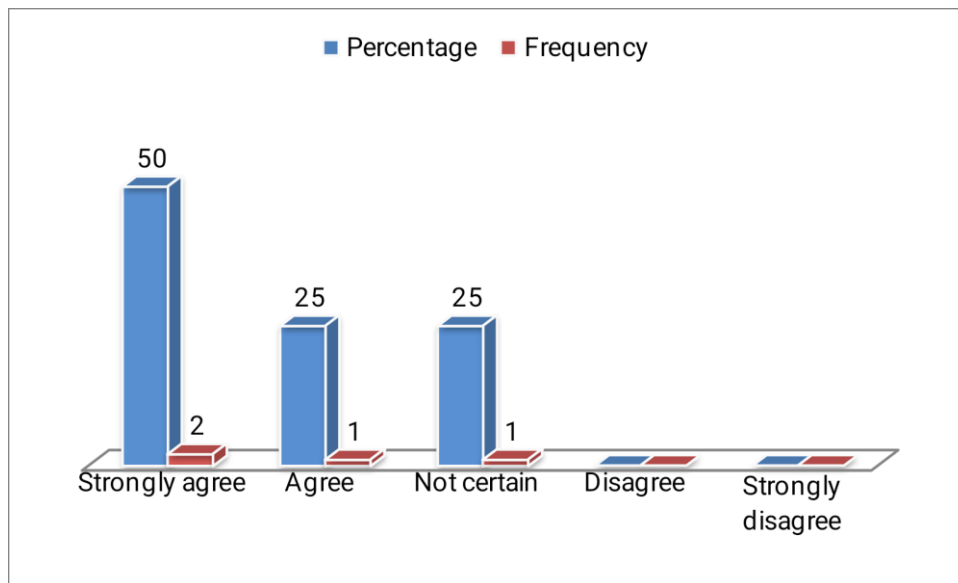*Source: Field Survey, 2022*

Fig. 3. Depicts the frequency distributions of respondents'' responses to the statement
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Moreover, the findings from Fig. 3 show that 75% of the respondents agreed and 25% strongly disagreed with the statement that intelligence can influence the adoption of leadership practices of heads. Intellectual ability is about knowing to perform a key task at the workplace. Fig. 3 indicates that the majority of respondents agreed that intellectual ability did influence the leadership practices of the heads. These findings confirm a study conducted by Sunindijo, et al. [17] on the

construction of managers in Thailand who found that emotional intelligence generates delegating, open communication, and proactive behavior.

Concerning the statement whether inclusivity influences the adoption of leadership practices of school heads. The findings from Fig. 4 revealed that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 25% disagreed. However, 25% of the respondent was not certain as to

Fig. 4. Shows the responses of respondents on whether inclusivity influences leadership practices of senior high school heads
Source: Field survey, 2022

whether the statement influenced the adoption of leadership practices. Inclusivity in the opinion of Yulk and Chavez (2002) purposeful inclusivity in an organizational is a very important factor that influences the adoption of a particular leadership style. There is a purpose for every leadership assignment and anyone chosen as a leader ought to consider inclusive leadership practices if meaningful organizational progress is to be made. Manning and Curtis [24] corroborate this proposition by observing that inclusiveness and a sense of purpose are key factors that underpin the choice of a particular leadership practice by a school leader [27,28].

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study has brought to the fore the fact that the combination of factors identified in the literature is more likely to be successful to influence the adoption of leadership practices of school heads. Most respondents settled on interpersonal and communication, intellectual ability, and inclusive approach as influential factors for the adoption of leadership practices in schools. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend the Ghana Education Service through the Ministry of Education organize periodic leadership training for heads of senior high schools to equip them with appropriate and innovative leadership practices.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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