

## The Influence of the School Head Leadership Styles on Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania

<sup>1</sup>Saudan Hadgama, <sup>2</sup>Demetria Gerold Mkulu

<sup>1,2</sup>St. Augustine University of Tanzania.



### Article History

Received: 05.09.2025

Accepted: 19.10.2025

Published: 28.11.2025

Corresponding Author:  
Saudan Hadgama

Email:  
saudanlema@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This study examined the influence of school head leadership styles on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania. A mixed-methods approach utilizing convergent parallel design employed, with data collected through questionnaires from teachers and semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentary reviews. A sample size of 100 participants, including 94 students, 4 head teachers, and 2 Ward Education Officers. The study was guided by Situational Leadership Theory. The instruments were valid and Reliable for data collection, giving Cronbach's Alpha 0.7. The results indicated that the predominant leadership contradictory approach characterized by high control but low support, closely aligning with autocratic tendencies. Teachers felt excluded from decision-making, reported being demotivated by autocratic leadership, and observations confirmed a top-down management style that limited teacher autonomy. Some superficial democratic practices, such as encouraging idea sharing, were observed; there was a significant lack of genuine participatory leadership in critical areas, including policy implementation and consensus building. The study concludes that the prevailing leadership styles significantly undermine teacher morale and commitment. We recommend that secondary school heads should adopt all kinds of leadership styles, policymakers institute continuous leadership training, and revise policies to formalize inclusive decision-making processes, enhance teacher commitment, and improve educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Teachers' Commitment, Autocratic Leadership, and Democratic Leadership.

### Cite this Article

Hadgama, S. & Mkulu, D. G. (2025). The Influence of the School Head Leadership Styles on Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania *GRS Journal of Arts and Educational Sciences, Vol-1(Iss-5),55-65*

## Introduction

Effective leadership is a critical catalyst for success in human institutions, and its quality is a noted point of divergence between developed and developing nations, with Africa's development challenges often linked to poor leadership that has permeated its institutions, including the education sector (Adair, 2020; Bass & Avolio, 2021; Adjei, 2022). Within schools, the leadership style of the head teacher is profoundly connected to overall school effectiveness, teacher motivation, and self-efficacy (Astuti et al., 2020; Baptiste, 2019). This is particularly important because teachers' commitment, which is the psychological link between a teacher and their school, is a decisive factor for school achievement, student performance, and lower teacher turnover (Azis et al., 2019; Balfanz, 2019). Therefore, assessing how specific leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional influence this commitment is essential (Mooman & Lashari, 2023).

Global empirical evidence consistently underscores the significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher commitment and retention. In the United States, high teacher attrition rates have been linked to factors including low organizational commitment and poor school climate, which are influenced by leadership (García et al., 2022; Chambers, 2019). Studies across various continents reinforce this; for instance, transformational leadership showed a positive correlation with

teacher commitment in Bhutan and Ethiopia, while distributed leadership had a similar effect in Belgium and Turkey (Gyeltshen, 2019; Metaferia, 2023; Alshehri, 2022; Samancioglu et al., 2020). However, the impact of specific styles can vary by context, with research in Ghana finding transactional leadership most influential on commitment, and studies in Uganda and Pakistan highlighting the positive effects of democratic leadership and the negative consequences of laissez-faire styles (Ruth & Hinneh, 2023; Speria & Kanyesigye, 2023; Jilani, 2023).

In the specific context of Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania, a clear problem has been identified. Teachers' commitment is recognized as a challenge that hinders school heads in performing their supervisory duties effectively, a situation exacerbated by unfavorable working conditions like a lack of resources and low funds (Msuya & Mwila, 2023). While existing empirical evidence establishes a general link between school leadership and teacher commitment (Ndauka, 2021; Mpangala & Urrio, 2024), there is a critical absence of localized, empirical evidence detailing how the various leadership styles of head teachers directly influence teachers' commitment in the public secondary schools of Ubungo Municipality.

This study, therefore, aims to address this specific research gap. The core problem is the low commitment among teachers in Ubungo Municipality and the lack of empirical understanding of how school heads' leadership styles directly influence this issue within its unique socio-economic and cultural context.

Consequently, this research seeks to explore the influence of various leadership styles employed by school heads on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality. The ultimate goal is to provide actionable insights for school heads and policymakers to enhance teacher retention, performance, and overall educational outcomes in the region.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Globally, the influence of school leadership styles on teacher commitment is well documented, with practices such as transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership significantly affecting teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (García et al., 2022; Jilani, 2023). However, within the specific context of Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania, the precise impact of these leadership styles remains unclear. This knowledge gap is particularly concerning given the region's documented challenges, including persistently poor student performance on national examinations and reports of low teacher dedication, which collectively threaten the provision of quality education and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

The need for localized research is critical because the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Ubungo, compounded by issues like unfavorable working conditions and a lack of resources (Msuya & Mwila, 2023), create a distinct environment that global studies cannot fully capture. While prior local studies have highlighted symptoms of these problems, the direct influence of various leadership styles employed by school heads on teacher commitment in these specific settings remains underexplored. Therefore, a focused investigation is essential to identify the root causes of low commitment and to develop targeted strategies for improving educational outcomes in the municipality.

### **Study Objectives**

- i. To examine the influence of autocratic leadership style on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania
- ii. To find out if democratic leadership style impacts teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Review**

This study is guided by the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), which posits that effective leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach but is instead composed of two key behaviors that must be adapted to the context: task behavior and relationship behavior (Kaifi et al., 2014). Task behavior involves the leader directing followers by defining roles, setting goals, and organizing work, while relationship behavior focuses on providing support through multi-way communication, coaching, and encouragement (Khanfar et al., 2013). A core principle of SLT is that a leader's effectiveness is contingent upon the readiness level of their followers—their ability and willingness to perform a given task—requiring the leader to adjust their style accordingly (Tsolka, 2020).

In application to this research, SLT provides the framework for analyzing how school heads in Ubungo Municipality influence

teachers' commitment, as the ability to identify staff strengths and weaknesses helps map improvement strategies (Ahmady & Khani, 2022). The theory guided the examination of school heads' directive behavior (e.g., giving clear instructions and setting performance expectations) and their supportive behavior (e.g., building trust through communication and encouragement). Furthermore, the study incorporated the concept of teacher readiness, assessing how teachers' capacity and motivation levels interact with different leadership styles. By applying SLT, the research sought to understand how a school heads' ability to appropriately match their task and relationship-oriented behaviors to the specific situation and readiness of their staff can foster greater teacher commitment in public secondary schools.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

#### **i The effect of Autocratic leadership style on teachers' commitment**

Parlar et al. (2022) conducted a study in Asia. The study employed a cross-sectional design to explore the mechanisms between authoritarian leadership and teacher commitment. The findings revealed that authoritarian leadership does not directly affect commitment but does so indirectly through mediating variables. Specifically, such leadership erodes teachers' trust in their principal and fosters a culture of organizational silence, where teachers withhold their opinions. This combination of low trust and high silence subsequently leads to a significant decrease in teachers' affective commitment to the school.

The study of Mbonu & Azuji (2021) in Nigeria used a correlational research design to investigate the link between distributed leadership and teacher commitment in Anambra State. The results demonstrated a statistically significant, though low-positive, relationship between the two variables. This indicates that when principals share leadership responsibilities with their staff, it can enhance teachers' organizational commitment. Based on this, the authors recommended that school management commissions actively equip principals with knowledge and skills in distributed leadership practices to foster greater teacher buy-in and dedication.

Mwesigwa et al. (2020) in Uganda utilized a cross-sectional, quantitative design with correlation and regression analysis across five public universities. The study found that leadership styles significantly influence organizational commitment, but this relationship is not direct. Instead, job satisfaction acts as a crucial partial mediator. This means that effective leadership first enhances teachers' job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens their commitment to the institution. The study underscores the importance of leadership approaches that actively improve job satisfaction to boost commitment ultimately.

Kashamba (2023), in Kagera-Tanzania studied how school leaders influence teachers' commitment in public secondary schools. The study Grounded in transformational leadership theory, this study used a quantitative cross-sectional design. It identified a strong and statistically significant association between the instructional leadership and supervisory practices of school heads and the level of teacher commitment. However, the data showed that teachers exhibited only a moderate level of commitment overall. This finding highlights a critical gap in leadership effectiveness and suggests that strengthening instructional leadership is a necessary

strategy for improving teacher dedication in the region's public schools.

The study of Masindi (2022) was conducted in Tanzania, Kinondoni Municipality. The researcher adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design with a large sample of teachers. Its key finding was a significant negative relationship between the autocratic leadership style of school heads and teacher performance. In contrast, democratic leadership showed a clear positive correlation. The study concluded that teachers' perception of their head teacher's style directly impacts their performance, recommending targeted training for heads in motivational and participatory leadership techniques to create a more positive and productive school environment.

## ii **The effect of Democratic leadership style on teachers' commitment**

Jony (2019) in Bangladesh used a structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended items to assess the impact of three leadership styles. The analysis determined that democratic leadership, characterized by consultation, shared decision-making, and involvement, was the most effective and had a strong positive influence on organizational success. Conversely, autocratic leadership is found to have significant negative consequences. The study strongly advocates for leaders in Bangladeshi organizations to abandon top-down approaches in favor of inclusive and participatory practices to drive performance.

The study of Alzoraiki (2023) in the Middle East investigated the mediating role of teachers' commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainable teaching performance. The study used a sophisticated quantitative approach, collecting 374 valid questionnaires and analyzing them with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). It confirmed that transformational leadership positively influences both teacher commitment and sustainable teaching performance. Crucially, the analysis identified teacher commitment as a full mediator in this relationship. This means that transformational leadership boosts sustainable performance primarily by first fostering a strong sense of commitment among teachers, highlighting commitment as the essential bridge between leadership and long-term results.

Pieters (2022) in Namibia employed a cross-sectional survey design and analysis using SPSS, focused on authentic leadership. The study found that key components of authentic leadership such as leaders' transparency, ethical conduct, and open sharing of information were significant predictors of higher organizational commitment among teachers. Additionally, teachers' perceptions of interactional justice and finding psychological meaning in their work strongly linked to commitment. The study recommends leadership development programs focused on building these authentic traits to enhance teacher engagement.

Abasilim et al. (2019) in Nigeria conducted a study to examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee commitment. This research analyzed survey data using SPSS to, with a specific focus on demographic factors. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between transformational leadership and commitment, a weak negative relationship for transactional leadership, and an insignificant link for laissez-faire. A major contribution was revealing that demographics like gender, age, and

education level mediate the leadership-commitment relationship, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive leadership strategies tailored to the specific workforce.

In Tanzania, Ndauka (2021) conducted a qualitative case study in Morogoro that used purposive sampling for participants, including school heads and teachers. The study found that, despite the reported use of democratic leadership, teacher commitment remained low due to pervasive issues like inadequate motivation, lack of recognition, and limited promotion opportunities. The study recommends that school heads adopt a more flexible, situational approach to leadership, sometimes using democratic and other time's autocratic styles as needed, and implement regular performance evaluations to systematically monitor and improve commitment levels.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques within a convergent parallel design. The quantitative approach facilitated the collection of demographic data and numerical information on leadership styles and teacher commitment from a broad group of participants, while the qualitative approach provided detailed, in-depth insights into the lived experiences of teachers and head teachers (Kothari, 2004; Rhodes, 2014). This design allowed for the simultaneous collection of both data types during a single field visit, enabling the exploration of the research topic from multiple viewpoints and supporting triangulation by cross-verifying results from different sources (Creswell et al., 2023; Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Ubungu Municipality, selected for its diversity, and documented challenges with teacher commitment and student performance. A sample size of 100 participants, determined using Kalinger's formula, included 94 teachers selected via simple random sampling, and 4 head teachers and 2 Ward Education Officers (WEOs) selected through purposive sampling based on their positions.

Data collection relied on primary sources using a multi-method strategy: semi-structured interviews conducted with head teachers and WEOs; self-administered questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions distributed to teachers; observations of interactions and school activities recorded using a checklist; and a documentary review of school records, like meeting minutes and attendance registers, was performed. For data analysis, quantitative data from questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics with SPSS software, while qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using narrative and thematic techniques. To ensure validity, methodological and data triangulation were employed, and instruments were validated by experts. Reliability for quantitative instruments was confirmed through a pilot study, achieving a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7, and trustworthiness for qualitative data was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability measures (Creswell, 2018; 2023).

## **Findings**

### ***The effect of the Autocratic leadership style on teachers' commitment***

The purpose of this objective was to measure the influence of autocratic leadership style among visited heads of schools on teachers' commitment. To begin, the researcher asked the teachers

to rate the practices of their head with reflection on the features of autocratic leadership. The findings of the teacher's response presented in Table 4.3, followed by interpretation and implications.

**Table 4.1 Teachers' Response to Practices of Autocratic Leadership Style**

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i The head teacher makes decisions without consulting teachers.	3	4%	7	9%	4	5%	44	55%	22	28%
ii The head teacher strictly enforces rules with little flexibility.	12	15%	36	45%	10	13%	20	25%	2	3%
iii Teachers feel pressured to follow instructions without question.	24	30%	42	53%	0	0%	8	10%	6	8%
iv The head teacher rarely explains the reasoning behind decisions.	24	30%	38	48%	4	5%	9	11%	5	6%
v Creative teaching methods are discouraged in favor of strict compliance.	2	3%	4	5%	5	6%	36	45%	33	41%
vi The head teacher maintains a clear hierarchy with limited staff input.	18	23%	14	18%	30	38%	8	10%	10	13%

**Source: Researcher, 2025**

The findings from Table 4.3 show that a majority of teachers disagreed with the autocratic practice (the head teacher makes decisions without consulting teachers), with 44 (55%) disagreeing and 22 (28%) strongly disagreeing, totalling 83% disagreement. Only a small portion supported this approach, with three (4%) strongly agreeing and seven (9%) agreeing, while four (5%) remained neutral. This suggests that most of the visited teachers value participatory decision-making and feel excluded when their input is ignored. The statement of the head teacher strictly enforces rules with little flexibility. Responses were mixed but leaned toward agreement, with 12 (15%) strongly agreeing and 36 (45%) agreeing; 60% of teachers supported strict rule enforcement. However, a significant portion expressed opposition, with 20 (25%) disagreeing and two (3%) strongly disagreeing, while 10 (13%) were neutral. This indicates that while many teachers accept rigid rules, a quarter prefer more adaptability.

In addition, the researcher asked teachers if they feel pressure to follow instructions without question. An outstanding 83% of teachers (24 Strong Agree, 30%; 42 Agree, 53%) agreed they face pressure to comply unconditionally. However, only eight teachers (10%) disagreed, 6 (8%) strongly disagreed, and none were neutral. This highlights a dominant culture of top-down authority, where questioning directives is perceived as unfair among teachers. The study also needs to understand if the head teacher rarely explains the reasoning behind decisions. Then, the findings revealed that 78% (24 Strong Agree, 30%; 38 Agree, 48%) felt decisions were inadequately justified. Few teachers disagreed (9, 11% Disagree; 5, 6% Strong Disagree), and 4 (5%) were neutral. The study established that the lack of transparency might contribute to frustration or disengagement among staff.

Furthermore, when the teachers were asked if creative teaching methods are discouraged in favour of strict compliance, they

strongly rejected this idea, with 36 (45%) disagreeing and 33 (41%) strongly disagreeing, with 86% combined. Only two teachers (3%) strongly agreed and four (5%) agreed, while five teachers (6%) were neutral. This suggests a strong desire for pedagogical innovation, with resistance to rigid, compliance-driven teaching. Moreover, the teachers asked if the head teacher maintains a clear hierarchy with limited staff input. Teachers' opinions divided: 18 (23%) strongly agreed, and 14 (18%) agreed, with 41% of teachers supporting hierarchical leadership. Meanwhile, 30 (38%) were neutral, and 18 (23%) disagreed (8 Disagree, 10%; 10 Strong Disagree, 13%). The high neutrality rate may reflect ambivalence or varying experiences across departments. Generally, the visited teachers reject autonomous decisions, but they face pressure to comply. Strict rules are tolerated, yet creativity is valued. While explanations for decisions are lacking, leading to dissatisfaction, staff are split on whether hierarchy conquers input. The study also asked the visited teachers if the head teacher consulted teachers before making a decision, and their responses are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Head teacher decision making (n= 80)**

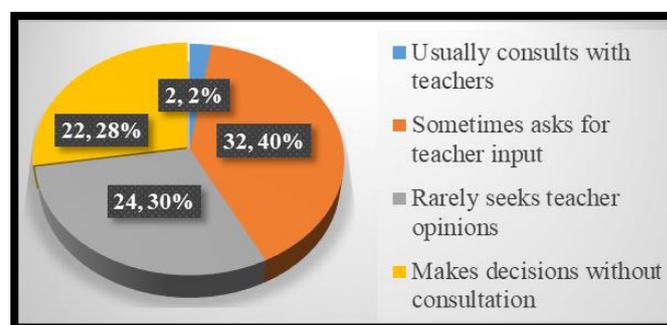


Figure 1 illustrates the decision-making styles of school heads as perceived by teachers in Ubungu Municipality. According to the

data, 40% of head teachers sometimes ask for teacher input, representing 32 out of 80 respondents. Meanwhile, 30% of head teachers rarely seek teacher opinions, accounting for 24 respondents. Additionally, 28% of head teachers make decisions without any consultation, as reported by 22 teachers. Notably, only 2% of head teachers usually consult with teachers, corresponding to just two respondents. The data reveal that the prevailing leadership style in making decisions among school heads in Ubungu Municipality is not collaborative. A shocking 98% of teachers report that their school heads never, either rarely, or only sometimes involve them in decisions. Specifically, the combined percentage of school heads who rarely or never consult teachers is 58% (30% + 28%). This indicates a dominant autocratic or top-down leadership style. Only a very small minority (2%) of school heads practice a truly democratic or participative approach, usually consulting with teachers.

This finding has significant implications for the study on the influence of leadership on teacher commitment. According to literature on organizational behavior and educational leadership, teacher commitment is linked strongly to their sense of empowerment and involvement. When teachers are consulted and their opinions are valued, they feel a sense of ownership, trust, and respect. This psychological feeling is a powerful driver of their commitment to the school's goals and overall success. Conversely, when decisions are made without their input, it can lead to a sense of exclusion, low morale, and reduced professional commitment. This lack of involvement can also breed resentment and a perception that the head teacher does not value their professional expertise. When this persists, the teachers' trust in the head of school is reduced to the extent that their commitment is affected. These findings correlate with the study conducted by Parler et al. (2022) in Asia, who found that authoritarian leadership indirectly impacts teacher commitment by affecting trust in the principal and leading to silence. Trust in the principal was found to mediate the effect of authoritarian leadership on defensive silence. Authoritarian leadership behaviours decreased teachers' affective commitment by reducing trust in the principal and increasing organizational silence.

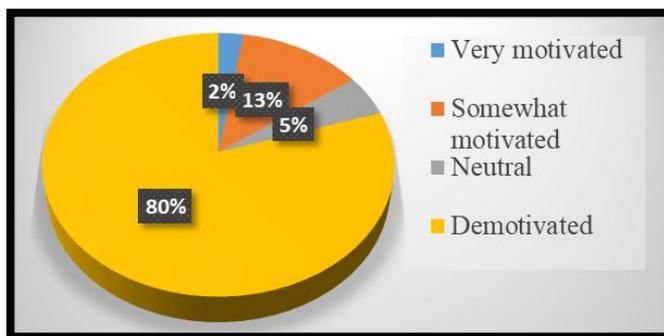
The findings suggest a direct correlation where the predominance of leadership styles that are not consultative could be a major factor behind any observed issues with teacher commitment in Ubungu Municipality. A school environment where teachers are excluded from making decisions can suppress initiative, hinder collaboration, and ultimately affect the quality of teaching and learning. The low level of participative leadership (2%) indicates that most school heads are missing a critical opportunity to boost teacher commitment by engaging them in the planning and execution of school activities. In addition, the findings highlight a critical need for professional development programs for school heads in Ubungu Municipality. Training should focus on fostering democratic and participative leadership skills, including how to effectively consult with teachers, value their input, and create a collaborative school culture.

Furthermore, educational authorities in Tanzania should review existing policies to encourage inclusive decision-making processes at the school level. The Ministry of Education could mandate the formation of school committees with teacher representation for key decisions. Moreover, school heads need to establish formal and informal communication channels to ensure teachers feel heard.

This could include regular departmental meetings, suggestion boxes, or open-door policies.

Moreover, the teachers asked their views on the extent of teachers' motivation with an autocratic leadership style. Their response presented in Figure 2, followed by interpretation and discussion.

**Figure 2 Teachers' Motivation with Autocratic Leadership Style (n= 80)**



The findings in Figure 2 illustrate the level of teacher motivation under an autocratic leadership style. The majority of teachers, 80%, report feeling demotivated in such an environment. In contrast, 13% feel somewhat motivated, while 5% remain neutral. Only a small fraction, 2%, indicates that they are very motivated despite the autocratic approach. The data reveal a strong negative correlation between an autocratic leadership style and teacher motivation. A shocking 80% of teachers reported feeling demotivated under this leadership approach. This critical finding aligns directly with the previous analysis on decision-making, where 58% of school heads found that they either never or rarely involve teachers in decisions. The two findings support each other as they highlight that the lack of participation (autocratic leadership) directly leads to demotivation.

This finding is highly significant for the current study on "The Influence of the School Head Leadership Styles on Teachers' Commitment." According to leadership theories, an autocratic style, characterized by a leader who dictates policies and makes all decisions without consulting subordinates, often leads to low morale and productivity. Teachers who feel they have no voice or autonomy in their work environment are likely to feel undervalued and uninspired. This feeling of being demotivated can directly lead to a decline in commitment, as teachers may disengage, show less initiative, and be less willing to go the extra mile for the school's success. The minimal percentage of "very motivated" teachers (2%) further emphasizes that the autocratic approach is ineffective in fostering a positive and engaged teaching force. The small number of "somewhat motivated" and "neutral" teachers could be explained by other motivating factors, such as personal dedication or a positive relationship with colleagues, that temporarily counteract the negative influence of the leadership style.

The study established that school heads in Ubungu Municipality must be encouraged and trained to shift away from an autocratic leadership style. The data strongly suggest that this approach is counterproductive and disadvantageous to teacher morale. Educational leaders, such as Ward Educational Officers, should focus on creating a supportive and empowering environment among teachers to raise their morale and commitment. This involves delegating responsibilities, trusting teachers' professional

judgment, and actively involving them in school improvement processes. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate the need for a fundamental shift. Instead of using authority to compel compliance, school heads should use strategies that motivate and recognize teachers' efforts and contributions, which can help rebuild a sense of value and professional respect. For example, the school head might employ a distributed leadership style that can foster teachers' commitment. As argued by Mbonu & Azuji (2021), there is a significant positive relationship between the distributed leadership style of secondary school principals in Anambra State (Nigeria) and teachers' commitment to the organization.

Furthermore, through interviews with the head of schools, the study needs to know how the visited head of schools would describe their leadership approach. The response from the visited head of school is recorded in quotations as follows:

My leadership approach, I'd say, is quite hands-on, especially when it comes to curriculum and standards. I believe it is essential to maintain a certain level of oversight to ensure quality education is delivered consistently across all classrooms. Sometimes, I find myself deeply involved in the daily specifics, guiding teachers on what to teach and how to manage their time, because ultimately, the buck stops with me for the school's performance (Interview, C July, 2025)

This head of school describes a highly directive and controlling leadership approach. The focus on being "hands on" and "deeply involved in the daily specifics" aligns with a style that limits teacher autonomy. This aligns with the study's finding that a majority of teachers feel they lack freedom and cannot set their own goals. The justification for this approach, ensuring "quality education" and maintaining "oversight," implies a lack of trust in teachers' professional judgment, which can significantly undermine their sense of ownership and commitment. This leadership style reinforces the restrictive environment noted in the study, where teachers are closely supervised, directly contributing to disengagement and frustration.

Interviewee B commended:

I generally allow teachers to manage their classrooms as they see fit, but there are non-negotiables, especially around school policies and expected outcomes. It's a balance, really. I try not to micromanage, but I also have to ensure that we are all moving in the same direction, which sometimes means being quite directive. I aim for a structured environment where everyone knows their role and responsibilities (Interviewee B, July 2025).

From the discussion, one of the interviewees reveals a seemingly balanced, yet ultimately inconsistent leadership style. While he claims to allow teachers to manage their classrooms, this is immediately qualified by the existence of "non-negotiable" and a need to be "quite directive" to ensure they are all moving in the same direction. This contradictory statement directly reflects the study's central finding of a leadership style that is neither truly supportive nor fully laissez-faire, and reflects an autocratic leadership style. The leader's attempt to strike a balance between autonomy and control results in an ambiguous and unpredictable

environment for teachers, where the level of freedom is conditional and subject to administrative direction. This inconsistency is a major obstacle to fostering teacher commitment, as it creates confusion and erodes trust. From the discussion, one of the participants claimed:

My style is more about setting the vision and then ensuring everyone aligns with it. I do provide a framework within which teachers operate to maintain consistency and order. While I prefer to give teachers space, there are times when direct intervention is necessary, particularly if I notice deviations from our established methods or if there's a need to maintain discipline and adherence to school rules. (Interviewee B, July 2025)

This quotation portrays a leadership style centred on control and compliance rather than collaboration and support. The head of school's focus on "setting the vision" and ensuring "everyone aligns with it" suggests a top-down approach where the teachers' role is to execute a pre-determined plan. The mention of providing a "framework" and intervening for "deviations" highlights a restrictive environment that prioritizes adherence to rules and established methods over teacher innovation and professional judgment. This approach contributes to the lack of professional autonomy reported by teachers in the study, reinforcing a culture where they feel they are not trusted to perform independently. This lack of perceived autonomy is a significant factor in lowering teacher commitment and morale.

Based on the interviews, the findings reveal that head teachers in Ubungo Municipality tend to employ a directive and controlling leadership approach. While they may describe their methods differently, with some claiming to seek a balance between autonomy and oversight, their quotations ultimately reflect a style that prioritizes adherence to school policies and established frameworks over teacher autonomy and professional judgment. This top-down approach and frequent direct intervention reinforce a restrictive environment, limiting teachers' sense of ownership and decision-making freedom. As such, these leadership styles appear to be a major contributing factor to the lack of teacher commitment and high levels of disengagement found in the study, as they create an atmosphere of low trust and support, which is often contradictory and confusing for teachers.

In contrast, a study from Kagera Region, Tanzania, titled "Heads of School and Teaching Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania" conducted by Kashamba et al. (2023), found that transformational leadership behaviours of school heads, which include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, are positively and significantly correlated with teacher commitment. This is the opposite of the Ubungo study's findings. This study suggests that when leaders focus on inspiring, motivating, and providing a supportive environment for teachers, it leads to a strong sense of commitment and devotion to their work. This is in stark contrast to the controlling and unsupportive leadership styles identified in Ubungo Municipality.

The study further used observation to reveal leadership styles and practices in the visited secondary school. The findings are presented in Table 1, followed by a discussion.

#### *Table 1 The Practices of Leadership Styles*

Aspect Observed	Observed Behavior	Interpretation
Head teacher's behavior	Meetings dominated by the head teacher; limited teacher input	Strong autocratic approach despite claims of democracy
Teacher engagement	Teachers are largely passive; minimal voluntary contributions	Low morale and a lack of ownership over decisions
Supervision style	Frequent compliance checks, minimal feedback, or practical support	High control combined with low support is a contradictory leadership style

Source: Field Data, 2025

The observational findings in Table 4.5 strongly verify both the interview and questionnaire results, reinforcing the conclusion that leadership in the studied schools is neither truly democratic nor genuinely supportive. Instead, it operates under a control and abandonment model. In formal settings like meetings, leadership is autocratic, with sessions primarily being instructional rather than participatory. While heads claim to have an "open door policy," real interactions show minimal dialogue or shared decision making, which reinforces earlier findings where heads insisted they "make the final call." This environment leads to passive teacher engagement; teachers' silence during meetings highlights their low affective and normative commitment. Rather than being active stakeholders, they act as passive recipients of instructions, reflecting demotivation and a lack of agency. Furthermore, supervision practices are contradictory: while heads maintain strict oversight of administrative compliance, they fail to provide instructional leadership or the necessary resources for teachers to overcome challenges. This directly resonates with teachers' complaints about being left to "solve problems on their own." These observed patterns align with previous statistical findings that showed a high degree of exclusion from decision-making (83%) and a heavy reliance on individual problem-solving (74%).

The implications of these observations for teacher commitment and school performance are significant. The poor leadership style leads to reduced teacher motivation, as their voices are ignored and engagement is minimal. This causes teachers to perceive their role as purely functional rather than strategic, which erodes their affective commitment. In addition, schools risk a decline in collaborative culture, losing opportunities for innovation and shared responsibility because meetings become one-way communication rather than platforms for problem-solving. Ultimately, this leads to increased burnout and turnover. The lack of support, combined with rigid compliance monitoring, creates stress and dissatisfaction. As a result, teachers are likely to disengage, perform at minimum standards, or even leave the profession altogether. This has a key policy level implication: educational authorities in Ubungo Municipality need to enforce leadership development programs that emphasize true participative practices, structured teacher feedback systems, and balanced supervision, not just control without support.

### *The effect of Democratic leadership style on teachers' commitment*

This specific objective of the study focused on the influence of democratic leadership style on teachers' commitment. The researcher presented six statements for teachers to rate from strongly agree to strongly disagree on the practices of democratic leadership styles. The findings are presented in Table 4.6.

**Table 4. 1Practices of Demographic Leadership Style**

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i The head teacher involves teachers in decision-making.	7	9	4	5	3	4	40	50	26	33
ii Teachers are encouraged to share ideas for school improvement.	15	19	38	48	8	10	17	21	2	3
iii The head teacher considers teachers' opinions before implementing policies.	10	13	5	6	2	3	38	48	25	31
iv Different perspectives are valued during problem solving.	12	15	10	13	3	4	32	40	23	29
v Teachers feel empowered to suggest changes to school procedures.	22	28	30	38	2	3	14	18	12	15

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

The findings from Table 4.6 present teachers' perceptions of democratic leadership practices exercised by head teachers, based on six key statements. For Statement I, regarding whether the head teacher involves teachers in decision making, only 9 strongly agreed and 5 agreed (F = 7 and F = 4 respectively), while 4 remained neutral (F = 3). A significant majority, 50, disagreed (F = 40) and 33 strongly disagreed (F = 26), indicating that 83% of teachers do not feel involved in decision making. This suggests a notable absence of participatory leadership. In Statement II, which asked whether teachers are encouraged to share ideas for school improvement, responses were more positive. A combined 67 agreed or strongly agreed (F = 38 and F = 15), while 10 were neutral (F = 8). However, 21 disagreed (F = 17) and 3 strongly disagreed (F = 2). This reflects a relatively strong endorsement of democratic leadership in idea sharing.

In addition, statement iii explored whether head teachers consider teachers' opinions before implementing policies. Only 13 strongly agreed (F = 10) and 6 agreed (F = 5), while 3 were neutral (F = 2). A substantial 48 disagreed (F = 38) and 31 strongly disagreed (F = 25), meaning nearly 80% of teachers feel excluded from policy-making processes, highlighting a critical gap in inclusivity. In Statement iv, concerning whether different perspectives are valued during problem solving, 15 strongly agreed (F = 12) and 13 agreed (F = 10), while 4 were neutral (F = 3). However, 40 disagreed (F = 32) and 29 strongly disagreed (F = 23), indicating that 69 of the teachers feel their perspectives are not adequately considered, pointing to limited collaborative problem solving.

Statement v assessed whether teachers feel empowered to suggest changes to school procedures. Here, 28 strongly agreed (F = 22) and 38 agreed (F = 30), with only 3 neutral (F = 2). Meanwhile, 18 disagreed (F = 14) and 15 strongly disagreed (F = 12). This shows that 66% of teachers feel empowered, reflecting a strong democratic practice in this area. Then, Statement VI examined whether head teachers facilitate consensus-building among staff. Only 10 strongly agreed (F = 8) and 18 agreed (F = 14), while 5 were neutral (F = 4). A majority, 33, disagreed (F = 26), and 35 strongly disagreed (F = 28), with 68 who perceived a lack of collaborative leadership in consensus building. Generally, while some aspects of democratic leadership are present, particularly in idea sharing and procedural suggestions, the data reveal significant gaps in participatory decision making, policy inclusivity, and collaborative problem solving.

Based on the findings, the study established a significant gap between different aspects of democratic leadership in schools. While head teachers show some democratic practices, such as encouraging idea sharing (67 agreement) and empowering teachers to suggest procedural changes (66 agreement), they largely fail in the core areas of participatory leadership. A notable 83% of teachers feel excluded from decision-making, and nearly 80% believe their opinions not considered before policy implementation. This suggests a shallow rather than a practical democratic approach. Teachers given a platform for suggestions, but their input not consistently translated into actual influence on high-level decisions or policy. This disconnection is a critical issue as it can create a sense of discouragement, where teachers'

contributions are asked but not truly valued or acted upon, which can be even more demotivating than an openly autocratic style.

The implications of these findings for a current study are substantial. The findings suggest that teacher commitment likely undermined by the lack of genuine involvement in critical decisions. While the opportunity to share ideas might initially boost morale, the consistent exclusion from real policy and problem-solving processes (69 feel their perspectives are not considered) can lead to feelings of powerlessness and distrust. When teachers see that their expertise not utilized in substantive ways, their professional commitment can erode. This can reduce engagement, lack of initiative, and a decreased willingness to go beyond their basic duties. Therefore, the study established that for a school head's leadership style to positively influence teacher commitment, it must move beyond shallow democratic practices and embrace genuine and participatory decision-making. The data strongly suggests that the absence of such a core practice is a major barrier to fostering committed teachers in the public secondary schools of Ubungu Municipality.

The findings of this current study reflect the study of Ndauka (2021), who examined the contribution of heads of schools' leadership styles towards teachers' work commitment in public secondary schools in Morogoro. Ndauka's study revealed that, teachers in public secondary schools in Morogoro region often experience low levels of motivation, coupled with insufficient recognition, appreciation, and limited opportunities for promotion. Despite these challenges, most teachers acknowledged that the democratic leadership style was the dominant approach in their schools. Based on these findings, the study recommended that school management adopt leadership styles that are responsive to contextual needs, whether democratic or autocratic, to ensure the effective implementation of school objectives and to address factors that undermine teacher commitment. Furthermore, the research suggested that heads of schools should enhance their leadership practices by conducting regular evaluations and providing annual recommendations for teachers. Such measures would allow for continuous monitoring and improvement of teacher commitment levels.

Moreover, the study involved head teachers in interviews. The focus was on the influence of democratic leadership style on teachers' commitment and their response, presented as quotes supported by discussion. One interviewee stated that:

I always have an open-door policy. Teachers can come to me with any issue. We have staff meetings where I encourage them to speak up. The problem is, they are often too busy or they don't seem to have new ideas. The curriculum is already set by the ministry. My job is to make sure it's delivered properly and on time, not to reinvent it (Interview, A July 2025).

This quote shows that the head of school values an open communication culture, but the scope for teacher input is limited by systemic constraints. While the head claims to encourage participation, the emphasis is on implementing pre-determined policies rather than engaging teachers in creative or strategic decision-making. The comment that teachers "don't seem to have new ideas" also reflects a perception that teachers lack innovation,

which could discourage them from voicing opinions in the future. The leader's role is framed as one of strict compliance with ministry directives rather than collaborative adaptation.

This leadership approach is indicative of symbolic democracy, where teachers are invited to share their views, but the real influence of their input is negligible because core decisions (e.g., curriculum design) are externally imposed. Moreover, the leader's perception of teacher passivity creates a psychological barrier that undermines participatory practices. According to democratic leadership theory, genuine inclusion requires not just formal invitations to speak but mechanisms to ensure that contributions shape outcomes. Here, democratic ideals exist in rhetoric but not in practice, as efficiency and compliance take precedence over empowerment.

The study established that teachers who sense that their contributions have little bearing on outcomes are likely to disengage from school-wide decision-making. This reduces their affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization) and normative commitment (sense of obligation to contribute beyond classroom teaching). Over time, teachers may restrict their efforts to routine instructional duties rather than demonstrating initiative in areas like professional development or school improvement. Such dynamics weaken the collaborative culture that democratic leadership is intended to foster in the school environment.

Based on this idea, one of the respondents displayed:

I believe in shared leadership, but the truth is, not everyone is equally invested. I have told them many times to suggest training opportunities they want, but the requests are few. You can't force someone to be proactive. In the end, it's more efficient if I identify the areas of need and find the training that addresses them. It's about getting the job done (interviewee H, July 2025).

This quote reveals a tension between the leaders' professed commitment to shared leadership and the practical execution of authority. While the head expresses an interest in teacher input on professional development, the responsibility for initiating change defaults to the leader when teachers fail to respond. The phrase "not everyone is equally invested" suggests that the leader views teacher participation as optional and attributes low engagement to individual apathy rather than structural or motivational factors. This approach demonstrates partial democratic leadership, where the leader offers participation opportunities but quickly reverts to top-down control when teachers are perceived as inactive. This attitude overlooks possible reasons for teacher reluctance, such as fear of judgment, lack of confidence, or previous experiences of ignored input. Democratic leadership theory emphasizes shared responsibility and collective problem solving, yet this scenario reflects a managerial mindset where efficiency is prioritized over inclusivity. Such leadership, while practical, fails to cultivate the trust and agency necessary for sustained commitment.

Teachers who repeatedly encounter leadership that defaults to unilateral decision-making may develop learned helplessness, believing that their input is neither required nor impactful. This reduces both continuance commitment (motivation to remain because of meaningful professional engagement) and affective commitment (emotional investment in the school community). Over time, such conditions can foster a culture of compliance

rather than collaboration, where teachers do the minimum required without contributing to institutional growth.

Participant from school B had this to say:

Of course, I encourage it. But you have to understand the reality here. We are understaffed and stretched thin. We have to prepare for national examinations. Discussions about curriculum development and other big issues take a lot of time, and honestly, we don't have the luxury. We need to focus on what's measurable and what will get us results (Respondent, F. July 2025)

The head acknowledges the value of teacher participation but frames it as a luxury rather than a necessity. Immediate institutional pressures, such as examination performance, take precedence over democratic engagement. The emphasis on "what's measurable" suggests that the leader equates success with short-term outputs rather than long-term capacity building through collaboration. This represents instrumental leadership rather than a fully democratic model. While systemic constraints like staff shortages and accountability pressures are real, a democratic leader would seek creative strategies to integrate participation within these constraints rather than discarding it. By positioning democratic practices as incompatible with efficiency, the leader inadvertently fosters a compliance culture focused on quantifiable outcomes at the expense of teacher empowerment and innovation.

When leadership marginalizes teacher participation for the sake of performance metrics, teachers may feel alienated from the school's vision. This erodes intrinsic motivation and decreases affective commitment because teachers do not perceive themselves as partners in decision-making. The long-term implication is disengagement, where teachers limit their contributions to mandated tasks, undermining the collaborative culture necessary for sustainable school improvement. He added:

Before a big decision, I talk to a few senior teachers I trust, the heads of departments, for example. They understand the challenges. As for formal channels, we have staff meetings, but they are mostly for me to give instructions and to get updates. It's a very busy school, and we need a clear chain of command to avoid chaos. I don't have time for a long debate every time a decision needs to be made (Respondent M, July 2025)

This quote reveals a hierarchical decision-making approach masked by selective consultation. While the head seeks input from department heads, broader teacher participation is systematically excluded. Staff meetings are described as one-way communication channels, reinforcing a command and control leadership model. This practice exemplifies elitist consultation, which falls short of democratic leadership. True democratic engagement involves structured opportunities for all staff to voice opinions and influence outcomes, not just a trusted inner circle. The leader's justification for avoiding chaos and saving time reflects an efficiency-driven mindset that prioritizes order over inclusivity. Although such an approach may expedite decision-making, it erodes collective ownership of school initiatives. Teachers who are consistently excluded from key decisions may feel undervalued and powerless, leading to disengagement. The reliance on a few senior voices creates an "in-group/out-group" dynamic, which can breed resentment among other staff members. These findings are supported by the study conducted by Wator et al. (2025), who found that, when teachers were excluded from decision-making,

they became disengaged and less committed. This diminishes affective and normative commitment, making teachers less likely to go beyond their contractual duties or invest emotionally in the school's success.

## Conclusions

The study concludes that the leadership styles employed by heads of public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality significantly influence teacher commitment. The prevailing style found to be contradictory, characterized by high control but little support. This approach excluded teachers from making decisions, restricted professional autonomy, and offered minimal administrative guidance, thereby lowering morale and increasing frustration. Consequently, such inconsistent leadership contributed directly to low levels of teacher commitment and engagement, undermining the overall effectiveness of school management.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school heads in Ubungo Municipality adopt more democratic and supportive leadership styles, granting greater autonomy to experienced teachers and ensuring consistent, transparent practices to enhance teacher commitment. For systemic change, policymakers should mandate continuous leadership training for heads focused on delegation and collaboration, while revising policies to formalize inclusive decision-making that gives teachers a substantive role in school management. Furthermore, all stakeholders should foster a collaborative culture by establishing clear communication channels and empowering teachers to advocate for the empowering leadership practices they need, thereby directly linking improved leadership to better educational outcomes.

## References

1. Abasilim, U. D., Gbrevbie, D. E., & Osibanjo, O. A. (2019). Leadership styles and employees' commitment: Empirical evidence from Nigeria. *SAGE Open Journal*, 9(3), 1-15.
2. Adair, J. (2020). *Leadership for Innovation: How to Organize Team Creativity and Harvest Ideas*. Kogan Page.
3. Ahmady, S., & Khani, H. (2022). The situational analysis of teaching-learning in clinical education in Iran: a postmodern grounded theory study. *BMC Medical Education*, 22(1), 1-15.
4. Alshehri, K. (2022). Distributed leadership among school principals in the eastern region and its relationship to teachers' job satisfaction. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(1), 909-930.
5. Alzoraiki, M., Ahmad, A.R., Ateeq, A.A., Naji, G.M.A., Almaamari, Q., & Beshr, B.A.H. (2023). Impact of Teachers' Commitment on the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Sustainable Teaching Performance. *Sustainability Journal*, 15(5), 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15054620>
6. Astuti, S. D., Shodikin, A., & Ud-Din, M. (2020). Islamic leadership, Islamic work culture, and employee performance: The mediating role of work motivation and job satisfaction. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(11), 1059-1068.
7. Azis, N., Mahmud, R., & Muda, R. (2019). Student's academic performance in a financial reporting course using a framework-based teaching approach.
8. Balfanz, R. (2019). *Why teachers' commitment matters: The role of teacher engagement in student achievement*. Teachers College Press.
9. Baptiste, M. (2019). No Teacher Left Behind: The Impact of Principal Leadership Styles on Teacher Job Satisfaction and Student Success. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, 9(1), n1.
10. Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2021). *Full Range Leadership Development: Manual for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Mind Garden.
11. Chambers, M. J., Johnson, A., Jones-Rincon, A., Tsatenawa, V., & Howard, K. (2019). Why do teachers leave? A comprehensive occupational health study evaluating intent-to-quit in public school teachers. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research*, 24(1), e12160.
12. García, J. M. G. V., García-Carmona, M., Trujillo Torres, J. M., & Moya-Fernández, P. (2022). Teacher Training for Educational Change: The View of International Experts. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 14(1), ep338.
13. Gyeltshen, L. (2019). Principals' transformational leadership style and organizational commitment of the teachers in middle secondary schools of Bhutan. *Educational Management and Innovation Journal*, 2(2), 71-83.
14. Jilani, S. A. A. S., Bukhari, S. S. H., Lashari, A. A., Rasool, A., Khoso, T. A., & Shah, S. A. A. (2024). The Role of Heads' Leadership Styles in Public Sector Secondary School Teachers' Commitment in Sindh. *Migration Letters*, 21(2), 1629-1642.
15. Jony, M. T. I., Alam, M. J., Amin, M. R., & Jahangir, M. (2019). The impact of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles on the success of the organization. *Canadian Journal of Business and Information Studies*, 1(6), 28-38.
16. Kaifi, B. A., Noor, A. O., Nguyen, N. L., Aslami, W., & Khanfar, N. M. (2014). The importance of situational leadership in the workforce: A study based on gender, place of birth, and generational affiliation. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 3(2), 29-40.
17. Kashamba, A., Ngirwa, C. C., & Maulid, M. (2023). The Influence of School Heads on Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 21(3), 107-118.
18. Khanfar, N. M., Harrington, C. A., Alkhateeb, F. M., & Kaifi, B. A. (2013). Cultural differences in leadership styles of pharmacist preceptors. *Business and Management Research*, 2(1), 1-17.

19. Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, D. L. A. (2006). *Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction*. Paulines Publications Africa.
20. Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. New Age International.
21. Masindi, Y. (2022). *Effects of Leadership Style on Public Secondary Schools Teachers' Performance in Tanzania: A Case Study of Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam* (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
22. Mbonu, V. C., & Azuji, I. M. (2021). Relationship between school principals' distributed leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra state, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(1), 7-11.
23. Metaferia, T., Baraki, Z., & Mebratu, B. (2023). Link between transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment in Addis Ababa government secondary schools. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2194510.
24. Mooman, A. F., Ali, S. R., & Lashari, A. A. (2023). Role and responsibilities of public-school principals of Karachi: Perceptions & hurdles faced. *Global Educational Studies Review*, 8(8), 102-109.
25. Mpangala, C. S. & Urio, P. J. (2024). School Leadership Styles and Teachers' Satisfaction: A Case of Secondary Schools in Kigamboni District, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 4(2), 1-12.
26. Msuya, L. C., & Mwila, P. M. (2023). The effect of heads of schools' supervisory practices on learning achievement in public secondary schools in Ubungo municipality, Tanzania. *Journal of Educational and Management Studies*, 13(1), 1-13.
27. Mwesigwa, R., Tusiime, I., & Ssekiziyivu, B. (2020). Leadership styles, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among academic staff in public universities. *Journal of Management Development*, 39(2), 253-268.
28. Ndauka, S. S. (2021). The role of heads of schools' leadership styles towards teachers' work commitment in Tanzania public secondary schools. *Global Scientific Journals*, 9(11), 244-255.
29. Pieters, W. R. (2022). *Authentic leaders needed to enhance the organizational commitment of teachers in Namibia*. Repository.unam.edu.
30. Ruth, M. B. & Hinneh, K. (2023). Influence of Head Teachers' Leadership Styles on Teachers' Commitment in the Ledzokuku Municipality. *Scholars Journal of Science and Technology*, 4(4), 59-71.
31. Samancioglu, M., Baglibel, M., & Erwin, B. J. (2020). Effects of Distributed Leadership on Teachers' Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Organizational Citizenship. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(2), em0059.
32. Speria, K., & Kanyesigye, S. T. (2023). Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Teacher Commitment Among Secondary Schools in Uganda. *Voice of Research*, 12(1), 1-32.
33. Tsolka, A. (2020, February 28). Contingency and Situational Approaches to Educational Leadership. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press.