LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AT PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN GABORONE, BOTSWANA

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Article Info	Abstract
	Effective leadership in education is crucial for fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. The state of leadership in schools, particularly in developing countries, is often perceived as inadequate. This study aims to investigate leadership styles in Gaborone's public high schools in Botswana. It focused on gender leadership style choices in management, the prevalent leadership styles among Gaborone's public secondary school leaders, and the most effective leadership styles for fostering success in educational settings within the city. In line with these focal points, a descriptive survey design was employed, collecting quantitative data from fifty respondents comprising school heads, department heads, and teachers. Participants were selected using quota sampling techniques and responded to a questionnaire. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, bar charts, and histograms. The findings indicated that female management in Gaborone's secondary schools predominantly favoured the Authoritative Leadership Style, followed by Transformational and Charismatic Leadership. Meanwhile, male leaders exhibited a preference for Transformational, Charismatic, and Democratic Leadership styles. Recommendations include the development of comprehensive leadership training programs tailored specifically for school management. These programs should emphasize a diverse leadership style relevant to educational contexts, fostering a more adaptable and effective leadership approach within Gaborone's school system.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, institutions are progressively embracing leadership transformations to attain their goal. The adoption of various leadership styles across schools worldwide has resulted in diverse outcomes (Mayo, Mendle & Pastor, 2018). This underlines the importance of school leaders aligning their styles with the goals they aim to achieve (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Effective leadership strategies in schools are pivotal for enhancing operational efficiency, competency, and service delivery (Davies, 2020). Bakokonyane (2022) acknowledges that effective instructional leadership demonstrated by school principals in Botswana has the potential to transform underperforming rural primary schools into high-performing institutions. Research conducted by Kwatubana and Molaodi (2023) affirms that school leaders in Gaborone effectively contribute to managing various events, including crisis and disaster management, as well as providing support and care for both staff and students. Despite acknowledging the crucial importance of educational leadership, Wyllie (2020) raises a concern regarding the evolving nature and underlying reasons for the shifting roles of educational managers, and administrators in Botswana over the years. This is a research gap that the current study seeks to fill. Understanding these shifts holds significant relevance for policymakers, school leaders and future researchers.

However, in developed countries like the USA, there is a noticeable shift from authoritarian leadership to participative styles in government schools (Bass, 2020). Unlike the leadership practices in many schools in African countries, particularly in East Africa, management takes a different dimension. Government secondary schools in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda are often managed by senior leaders lacking contemporary leadership competencies (Glantz, 2018) while authoritative leadership strategies dominate in Cameroonian schools (Wirba, 2015). To improve this situation, Yohannes and Wasonga (2023) recommended participative leadership in Ethiopia as it was proven to be effective. Also, Mayo, Mendle, and Pastor (2019) highlighted the significant role of different leadership styles, notably a groundbreaking administration style in Zimbabwe during the mid-80s to '90s. This approach facilitated collaboration among stakeholders, driven by shared goals, mutual respect, and trust (Avolio & Bass, 2019).

In Botswana's education system, the sole responsibility for information and decision-making often rests with the management of public government schools, contributing to a lack of collaboration among staff members (Education Statistics Report, 2014). Consequently, Botswana revised its education policy to enhance teaching, learning, and overall educational standards to improve global competency. In spite of these efforts, secondary school management continues to face challenges, particularly in their leadership practices (Moswela, & Kgosidialwa, 2019). This evidence increases

complaints among teachers and learners and eventually leads to declining academic performance. Pansiri et al. (2021) contend that the absence of a culturally relevant ethical code for educational leaders aggravates unethical behaviour within the education system of the country.

Furthermore, contemporary school principals are confronted with diverse responsibilities that surpass traditional instructional leadership roles (Mayo & Meindel, Pastor, 2018). The conventional role of principals as primary instructional leaders has undergone transformation (Mpuangnan, 2023; Elmore et al., 2020). It is highlighting the necessity for effective leadership styles to foster school success (Khanyile & Mpuangnan, 2023). The impact of leadership style is significant in both private and government educational institutions (Elmore et al., 2020). Davies (2020) advocates for initiating strategic dialogues aimed at engaging and motivating stakeholders to acknowledge the necessity for change. This is a critical factor for the success and productivity of schools. Leadership effectiveness is not solely dependent on innate abilities but also on the prevailing context and environment (Messick & Krammer, 2018). This underlines the researchers' interest in conducting the study, as they aim to address the imperative for enhanced leadership strategies and collaborative practices within Botswana's secondary school management.

In essence, the current study serves to explore the impact of gender on management's choice of leadership style, the prevailing leadership style adopted by management in public secondary schools in Gaborone, and the most effective leadership styles for fostering success in educational settings in the region. It aims to investigate the extent to which gender influences the selection of leadership styles among school leaders, identify the dominant leadership approaches employed in public secondary schools in Gaborone, and determine the leadership styles that contribute most effectively to the success and productivity of educational institutions in the area. By addressing these issues, the research aims to offer recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness to drive educational success in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership strategies used in public secondary schools

Leadership strategies within public secondary schools profoundly impact institutional success. In many African countries, the absence of formal management policies in schools perpetuates the use of traditional, rigid leadership approaches, hindering academic performance (Bush et al., 2022). This antiquated management style is particularly prevalent in remote areas, where entrenched leaders avoid competition by resisting

change and upholding authoritarian practices, leading to strained staff relationships, decreased teaching quality, and subsequent poor student outcomes.

Conversely, in some government secondary schools, an emerging shift towards a democratic leadership style fosters a more conducive work environment (Mpuangnan, 2020). Teachers express greater satisfaction, feel supported, and observe improved student performance under such adaptable management (Mncube, 2015). Young, educated leaders who embrace change are making headway in certain schools, significantly influencing educational standards (Kalyugina, Kiseleva, & Chizhevskaya, 2018). However, the rigidity of traditional leadership styles remains deeply embedded in the education systems of many African countries, presenting challenges in adapting to the rapidly evolving educational landscape and negatively impacting students' academic achievements (Heussen-Montgomery & Jordans, 2020). Presently, education systems across several nations are transforming to align with global educational standards, aiming to cultivate competent students with international competitiveness (Lituchy, Galperin, & Punnett, 2017). These shifts indicate the need for a departure from outdated leadership approaches in schools to foster adaptability, improve staff-student relationships, and ultimately enhance academic performance.

Kalyugina, Kiseleva, and Chizhevskaya (2018) advocate for a governmental review of leadership structures within public secondary schools in developing countries, emphasizing the need for alignment with modern educational needs. Sagor (2021) echoes this sentiment, highlighting the necessity for adaptive strategies fostering collaboration between school leaders and teaching staff to enhance student performance. Hoy and Hannum (2017) further advocate for Ministries of Education to evolve from traditional, hierarchical leadership models toward more collaborative approaches that involve diverse stakeholders in evaluating and improving education standards. Greenleaf (2010) champions the transformative potential of democratic leadership in both primary and secondary public schools. This approach, characterized by shared decision-making and teamwork, is seen as instrumental in driving educational advancements and yielding positive academic outcomes among students.

Recognizing the pivotal role of leadership, Laguda (2020) emphasizes the risks posed by rigid management styles, underscoring their potential to undermine school dynamics and cooperation, and ultimately affect student welfare. In contrast, du Plessis (2017) applauds the shift in governmental approaches within developing countries, transitioning from passive to competitive leadership paradigms in public schools, aiming to match the standards set by private institutions. In Botswana, the government's commitment to enhancing education quality is evident through the adoption of a competitive leadership model in line with its education policy reforms (Education Statistics Report, 2014). This shift signifies a significant change in the leadership landscape of government secondary schools in the country.

Leadership and student academic performance

Leadership within educational institutions, notably schools, plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic environment. Harris and Jones (2018) underscore the significance of leadership in fostering effective, innovative schools, thereby enhancing the quality of education. However, the impact of school administrators on student achievement has been a topic of debate. While some studies suggest negative implications, there's recognition that specific leadership qualities profoundly influence student performance by improving working conditions and the educational milieu.

du Plessis (2017) emphasize that effective school leadership ensures the provision of essential resources for students and teachers, cultivating an environment conducive to quality education and leading to positive academic outcomes. Weak leadership, as highlighted by Masi (2020), can foster negative student behaviour, resulting in subpar learning experiences and subsequently poor academic performance. Naseer et al. (2016) further explain how inadequate leadership can inadvertently condone behaviours like smoking, bullying, and other misconducts, disrupting the teaching-learning process and impacting academic achievement negatively. Contrarily, Hipp's study in Tanzania (2017) demonstrated that assertive leaders who implement policies effectively contribute to positive student behaviour and improved academic performance. Bennis & Nanus (2015) argue that traditional leadership's resistance to change can hinder schools from adapting to the evolving educational landscape, limiting students' access to updated resources and learning strategies, thus affecting academic performance. Owen (2018) advocates for democratic leadership styles that foster motivation, interaction, and collaboration among students and teachers, ultimately leading to effective teaching and improved academic outcomes.

Theoretical Review

Trait Theory

According to Judge et al. (2009), leadership theories focus on identifying distinct traits that set leaders apart from others. These theories aimed to establish guidelines for selecting officials based on various individual characteristics. However, these attempts were unsuccessful as psychologists showed that individuals did not inherently possess such traits beyond physical characteristics and a predisposition to well-being. The concept shifted towards identifying traits commonly associated with leadership, including

insights, dominance, self-confidence, high energy levels, and productivity. These traits emerged consistently as key indicators of leadership.

While research studies have emphasized the challenges associated with trait theory (Jayawickreme et al., 2019; Fajkowska & Kreitler, 2018), it is predominantly credited in its original form as the basis for functional leadership theory (Dugan & Komives, 2011)). The theory asserts that individuals inherently possess specific features or traits that make them more suited to leadership roles. However, a major challenge with trait theory is the lack of a universally accepted set of characteristics that can reliably predict effective leadership (Defender, 2020). A more contemporary perspective of trait theory posits that everyone possesses varying levels of essential leadership qualities, and it is about how these traits are utilized. Goleman (2021) identified broad leadership traits, including drive, leadership motivation, intelligence, confidence, and emotional maturity. Nevertheless, trait theory's foundation remains on the premise that numerous characteristics associated with leadership can be developed over time. School leaders also possess qualities that can be nurtured for effective school management (Northhouse, 2021).

The trait theory of leadership seeks to differentiate leaders from non-leaders based on personality, social, physical, or psychological traits. However, it faces certain limitations, such as the absence of universal traits predicting leadership in all circumstances and ambiguous evidence establishing a causal relationship between leadership and traits. It also struggles to differentiate between effective and ineffective leaders and lacks consistency in predicting leadership effectiveness across various situations. The theory incorporates attributes like extraversion, integrity, and openness, asserting that leaders are more likely to exhibit these traits. However, these traits don't consistently apply across different situations and are more inclined to predict leader emergence rather than leader effectiveness.

Behavioural Theory

In contrast to the trait theory, the behavioural theory of leadership suggests that exceptional leaders aren't just born—they're made. This theory emphasizes the actions taken by leaders rather than solely focusing on inherent traits or psychological characteristics. According to the social theory perspective outlined by Rose et al. (2015), individuals can cultivate leadership qualities through education, training, experience, and observation. Behavioural theories aim to comprehend observable behaviours exhibited by effective leaders and propose that leadership skills are developed through learning, training, and observation.

Feidler and House (2020) have identified two pivotal leadership styles significantly influencing leadership effectiveness: consideration and initiating structure. Consideration involves the relationships and connections leaders build with their subordinates, while initiating structure involves organizing, directing, and defining roles within an organization, profoundly impacting its mission. Within the framework of behavioural theory, leadership behaviour can be classified into task-oriented and people-oriented approaches. Task-oriented behaviour revolves around roles, plans, work schedules, performance standards, and procedures. Conversely, people-oriented behaviour prioritizes employee welfare, interpersonal relationships, friendliness, supportiveness, trust, and confidence.

The notion that exceptional leaders are developed, not inherently born, is fundamental to behavioural theories of leadership. This theory prioritizes the actions and behaviour of leaders over their innate traits or mental states. Coleman (2016) noted that an interest in human factors sparked an exploration of leadership as a behavioural dimension within the workplace. This theory has expanded the scope of leadership research from a focus solely on personality traits to encompass leadership and management behaviours across various contexts. A behavioural model evaluates leadership based on the actions and behaviours of leaders, which reinforces fundamental leadership principles and enhances credibility. However, behavioural theory has some limitations. Establishing consistent links between leadership behaviours and outcomes such as motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity has been challenging (Bryman, 2019; Yukl, 2020).

Moreover, there have been inconsistent and inconclusive findings regarding the relationship between work and relationship behaviours and their impact on outcomes. Yukl (2020) indicates that the outcomes of extensive research efforts in this area are largely conflicting and uncertain. Similar to the trait approach, this theory struggles to identify universal behaviours associated with effective leadership. According to behavioural theory, the most effective leadership style is contingent on the situation; some situations may require complex, task-oriented behaviours, while others may demand straightforward, supportive behaviours.

Contingency Theory

Fiedler initiated the development of the Contingency Theory of Leadership in 1951, centring on the relationship between contextual elements, leaders' traits, and behaviours. Named the "Contingency Hypothesis of Leader Effectiveness," this theory suggests that leadership effectiveness relies on the match between a leader's style and the situation at hand (House & Aditya, 2017). Fiedler emphasized that leadership style remains relatively constant and reflects both personality and behaviour, indicating that leaders adapt to situations rather than alter their styles. The Contingency Management Model aims to

identify whether a leader's style—either relationship- or task-oriented—fits the situation, thus maximizing performance (House & Aditya, 2017). It revolves around the belief that exceptional leaders are developed, not inherently born. This theory focuses on leaders' behaviour rather than their innate traits or psychological state, suggesting that individuals can learn to be leaders through education, training, and experience (Rose et al., 2015).

While Fiedler's theory initially gained attention, it faced criticism in the 1970s due to conflicting experimental evidence and an inability to explain significant variations in group performance (Schriesheim & Kerr, 2017). Wong et al. (2023) advocate for a standardized set of general principles that could help address diverse leadership needs and challenges faced by managers. They highlight the complexity and difficulty in testing many contingency theories, pointing out that while these theories offer insights into leadership effectiveness, they come with conceptual limitations that restrict their applicability. Notably, they often overlook emerging managerial processes that influence how employees perceive themselves and their work. One key limitation of Fiedler's Contingency Theory lies in its assertion that a leader's style is fixed and cannot be predicted. This overlooks the adaptability and evolution of leadership styles in response to changing circumstances.

It can be learnt that Leadership Trait Theory, Authority Behavioural Theory, and Contingency Leadership Theory each offer unique perspectives for understanding how things work in government secondary schools in Gaborone. Think of Leadership Trait Theory as a checklist of qualities that might make a great leader. It is all about looking at the personal traits and qualities that school leaders in Gaborone have, such as how they communicate, adapt, make decisions, and set goals. By checking off these traits among school leaders, we get a better idea of how these qualities affect their ability to run a school well. Now, the Authority Behavioural Theory is more about watching leaders in action. Instead of just talking about their qualities, it is about observing what they do. For Gaborone's secondary schools, this means looking at how principals and teachers handle tasks, talk to each other, solve problems, and create a good learning environment. By watching these actions, we get clues about what makes a leader effective in a school setting. Contingency Leadership Theory is like the 'adaptation theory.' It's about understanding that the best way to lead depends on the situation. So, in Gaborone's schools, it's about seeing how leaders adjust their style depending on what's going on – like the school's culture, the kind of students there, or the resources available. It helps us figure out how leaders change their approach to get the best results in different situations. When we put all these theories together, we get a fuller picture of leadership in Gaborone's government secondary schools. It's like looking at leaders' traits, watching how they handle things day-to-day, and understanding how they adjust to different situations. This way, we can understand what works well in these schools and find ways to make things even better.

METHODOLOGY

Research methods

This study adopts a quantitative approach because it offers statistical validation and substantiates the findings (Elmore, 2020). It was necessary to employ a quantitative method to address the research questions and effectively validate the current circumstances. Employing this approach is crucial as it enables a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, facilitates data interpretation, and strengthens the conclusions drawn. The qualitative method was aided by using Microsoft Excel for analysing data and representing it in graphs, charts, and tables.

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive research design aimed at collecting quantitative data to thoroughly depict the nature and characteristics of the research subject. According to Charry (2019), a descriptive research design is instrumental in providing insights into the present condition of the issue, explaining its status concerning the variables or factors within the specific context. Through this approach, the study endeavours to offer a comprehensive understanding of the influence of gender on leadership style choices, the prevalent leadership approaches in public secondary schools in Gaborone, and the most effective leadership styles for promoting success in educational settings within the region.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in Gaborone, Botswana. In this study, 50 participants were specifically chosen through quota sampling. The sample group comprised teaching staff, department heads, and deputy or school heads from three selected public schools in Gaborone. Among the five public secondary schools in Gaborone (St. Joseph's, Ledumang, Gaborone Senior Secondary, Naledi Senior, and Mogoditshane Senior), three were purposefully chosen, encompassing 60% of the schools. The selection order, based on student performance, was St. Joseph's, Ledumang, and Gaborone Senior Secondary. This sampling strategy was adopted to ensure unbiased data collection by providing an equitable opportunity for participation across different educational levels. For specific details regarding the sample size, please refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1

Target Population and Sample

Management	Population	Sample	Percentage
Teaching staff	42	38	76%
Heads/deputy school head	9	6	12%
Heads of department	9	6	12%
Total	**60**	**50**	**100%**

Data Collection Method(s) and Analysis

A structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended inquiries was employed to gather comprehensive firsthand insights regarding the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was thoughtfully organized into three distinct sections. The initial sections covered the demographic details of the respondents, followed by an exploration of prevalent leadership styles in the second section. The final section covered the effective leadership styles specifically within public high schools situated in Gaborone. To administer the questionnaire, the researchers sought permission from the management of the selected schools and the participants and distributed the questionnaire to the heads of schools, department heads, and teachers.

Analysis

The nature of the data collected for this study was quantitative therefore, descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, bar charts, and histograms were used to analyse them. McCarthy et al. (2022) highlight that descriptive statistics help present data meaningfully, aiding in preparing the data for analysis. Consequently, the researchers utilized Microsoft Excel to code and process the data, generating results that addressed the study's objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Choice of leadership style across gender

The distribution of leadership styles across genders, as shown in Table 2, sheds light on distinctive preferences and tendencies in leadership approaches among females and males. Among female leaders, the Authoritative Leadership Strategy stands out as the most favoured style, encompassing a significant 76% of their leadership representation. Following closely behind are Transformational Leadership at 46% and Charismatic Leadership at 34%. Conversely, the Laissez-Faire Leadership style appears to have the least traction among female leaders, comprising only 18% of their adopted styles.

In contrast, male leaders exhibit a slightly different distribution. Their prominent styles include Transformational Leadership and Charismatic Leadership, each accounting for 48% of the male leadership landscape. Democratic Leadership closely follows at 46%. Similar to female leaders, Laissez-Faire Leadership remains less prominent among males, representing 32% of their chosen leadership styles. While some similarities exist in preferred styles, such as Transformational and Charismatic Leadership, there are discernible differences in the dominance of specific styles among genders. Female leaders tend to lean more towards Authoritative Leadership, while male leaders show a more balanced preference for Transformational, Charismatic, and Democratic Leadership styles.

Table 2

*Distribution of Leadership style across gender*

Gender	Leadership style	Frequency	%
Female	Authoritative leadership strategy	38	76
	Transformational leadership	23	46
	Transactional Leadership	13	26
	Laissez-Faire Leadership	9	18
	Democratic Leadership	11	22
	Charismatic Leadership	17	34
	Servant Leadership	15	30
	Coach-Style Leadership	21	42
Male	Authoritative leadership strategy	19	38
	Transformational leadership	24	48
	Transactional Leadership	17	34
	Laissez-Faire Leadership	16	32
	Democratic Leadership	23	46
	Charismatic Leadership	24	48
	Servant Leadership	14	28
	Coach-Style Leadership	21	42

Leadership strategies used by the management of public secondary schools

The data in Figure 1 demonstrates the prevalence of different leadership styles, showcasing their frequencies and percentages in Gaborone public secondary schools. It can be observed that Authoritative Leadership, holds the highest frequency at 82%. This suggests a strong inclination toward a directive leadership approach, where clear commands and instructions likely dominate the leadership landscape. Transformational Leadership closely follows at 74%, indicating a substantial focus on inspiring and empowering others toward a collective vision of growth and progress. Democratic Leadership, representing 52%, signifies a moderate acceptance of participative decision-making and inclusivity within the leadership framework. However, Charismatic Leadership (38%) and Laissez-Faire Leadership (34%) exhibit lower frequencies, indicating a comparatively less prevalent emphasis on charismatic influence or hands-off leadership styles. Servant Leadership, at 22%, and Coach-Style Leadership, at 30%, depict relatively lower frequencies within this dataset. Servant Leadership emphasizes serving others' needs, while Coach-Style Leadership involves guiding and nurturing individuals to reach their potential. The dominance of Authoritative and Transformational Leadership styles suggests a likely emphasis on clear direction and visionary leadership within this specific context. Conversely, the lower frequencies of Servant, Charismatic, and Laissez-Faire Leadership styles indicate a lesser prevalence of these approaches.

Figure 1

Leadership styles used by management in Gaborone public secondary schools
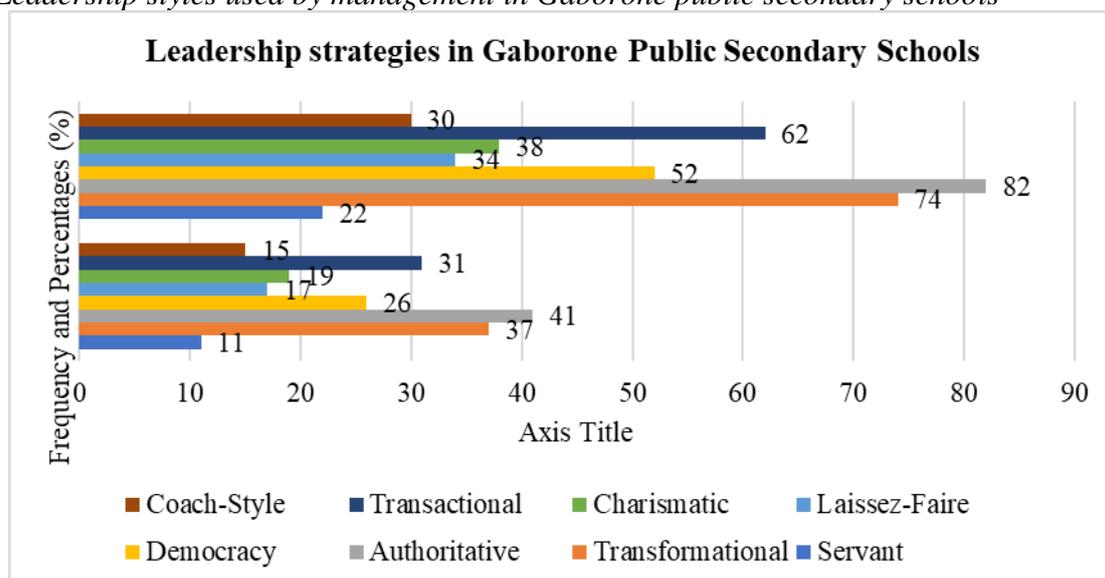
Effective leadership styles for improving performance at public secondary schools

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrate effective leadership styles for enhancing academic achievement within Gaborone secondary schools. Transformational Leadership emerges as a dominant and effective style, with a significant frequency of 43 instances, representing 86%. This style's emphasis on inspiration, motivation, and fostering

innovation holds promise for creating an environment conducive to academic growth. Its focus on shared goals and empowerment suggests potential benefits for both students and educators, fostering improvements in overall learning outcomes.

In most instances, the Democratic Leadership style, observed in 41 cases (82%), stands out strongly. This approach involves students, teachers, and stakeholders in decision-making, aiming to create a shared sense of ownership and teamwork. This inclusive method might create a supportive environment, boosting academic success by bringing everyone together. Servant Leadership, seen in 38 cases (72%), focuses on serving and nurturing others' growth. By prioritizing the needs of students and educators, this style could foster a culture of support and growth, potentially boosting academic performance. Transactional Leadership, observed in 31 instances (62%), is all about structured goal achievement through rewards. While it can drive performance, balancing this task-focused approach with strategies for students' overall growth might be beneficial. Coach-style leadership, found in 29 instances (58%), involves guiding individuals toward their potential. This could positively impact students' personal growth and development, potentially influencing academic achievement.

On the flip side, Authoritative, Laissez-Faire and Charismatic Leadership styles show lower frequencies. Their limited prevalence might suggest potential limitations in driving academic improvements due to their directive, hands-off, or personality-centric nature. The data highlights that Transformational, Democratic, Servant, Transactional, and Coach-Style Leadership approaches hold promise in fostering environments conducive to academic achievement in Gaborone secondary schools. Combining participative, inspiring, supportive, and goal-oriented leadership approaches could significantly contribute to creating an atmosphere that nurtures learning, growth, and academic success.

Figure 2

Effective leadership styles for public secondary schools

Suitable leadership styles for secondary schools
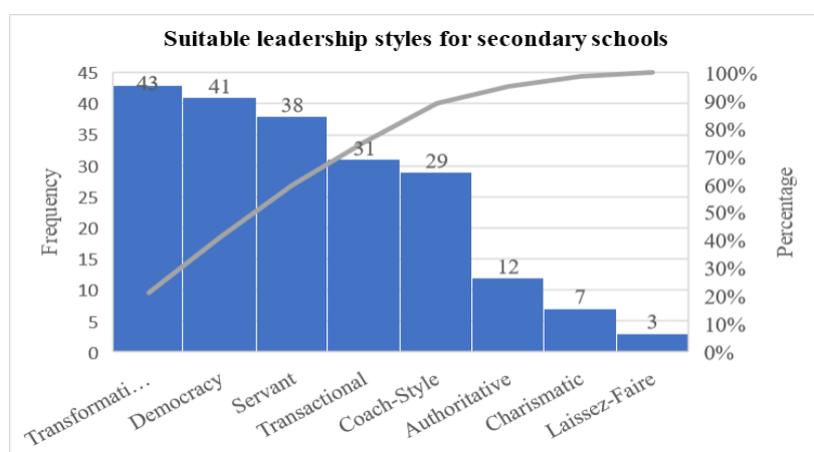
Discussion

The way leadership styles play out based on gender in Gaborone secondary schools paints an interesting picture. Among female school leaders, the Authoritative Leadership Style seems to be the most preferred, followed by Transformational Leadership and Charismatic Leadership. On the other hand, male leaders tend to exhibit more Transformational, Charismatic, and Democratic Leadership styles. This data seems a bit different from what Kulkarni & Mishra (2022) found about women, suggesting they might lean towards participative styles like Democratic or Transformational Leadership. Sagor's study (2021) emphasized how participative leadership fosters collaboration and empowerment within a team. For instance, a female school principal might involve teachers, parents, and students in decision-making, fostering a shared sense of ownership and community within the school. Contrary to the idea that men often favour directive or task-oriented styles like Authoritative or Transactional Leadership (Larsson & Alvinius, 2020), the findings about male leaders in Gaborone secondary schools don't fully align. Task-oriented styles usually emphasize clear instructions, precise goals, and efficiency. For instance, a male manager in a manufacturing company might take a more directive approach, setting specific targets and closely monitoring performance to ensure objectives are met within deadlines. Understanding these tendencies linked to gender helps organizations embrace diversity in leadership roles. Recognizing that individuals might naturally incline towards certain leadership styles due to societal norms or personal preferences allows for creating an inclusive environment valuing diverse leadership approaches.

Different leadership styles prevalent at Gaborone Secondary Schools create a diverse managerial landscape, catering to various needs within the institution. The dominance of transformational leadership signifies a focus on inspiring and motivating faculty and students towards shared goals. Ellen's research (2016) suggests that such leaders encourage others to prioritize collective well-being over personal interests. For example, when the principal encourages innovation and supports teachers in trying new teaching methods, it fosters a culture of ongoing improvement. Additionally, the prominence of democratic leadership highlights an inclusive decision-making process among the school's management. Studies by Kujala et al. (2022) suggest that involving stakeholders in decisions can boost commitment and productivity. For instance, during faculty meetings where teachers actively participate in decisions about curriculum changes or extracurricular activities, it fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among staff. Transactional leadership, emphasizing structured systems and rewards, reflects a balanced approach to task completion. According to Jiang, Bohle, & Roche (2019), these leaders use rewards and corrective actions to ensure goals are met. This might be evident in the school's clear guidelines for behaviour and academic performance, linking recognition or consequences to students' adherence to these standards. Moreover, the prevalence of servant leadership underscores a commitment to serving the needs of both students and staff. Zhang et al. (2021) emphasize that servant leaders prioritize the growth and well-being of their followers. Instances where school management actively supports

teachers' professional development or provides mentoring programs for struggling students align with this approach, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment.

The mix of transformational, democratic, transactional, and servant leadership styles at Gaborone Secondary Schools creates a rich tapestry of leadership approaches. This combination addresses different aspects of how the school operates, fostering innovation, inclusivity, efficiency, and a supportive environment in the school community. While these findings illustrate an adaptable leadership style that meets the diverse needs of education, they contrast with Bass' perspective (2020). Bass argues that many African public secondary schools rely on rigid, traditional leadership methods, impacting students' academic success. This opens avenues for future research. Exploring this area further, perhaps on a broader scale encompassing the entire African continent, could provide more comprehensive insights into leadership practices across diverse educational settings. Such studies could shed light on how leadership impacts academic achievements on a larger scale.

The data reveals a blend of leadership styles; Transformational, Democratic, Servant, Transactional, and Coach-Style Leadership that converge to create an environment ripe for academic success at Gaborone's secondary schools. This supports Crevani et al. (2021), highlighting that when you combine participative, inspiring, supportive, goal-oriented, and mentorship-driven leadership styles, schools become vibrant places for learning, growth, and accomplishment. This collaborative approach empowers teachers and fosters commitment and engagement among staff, evident in decisions made together about curriculum planning and extracurricular activities (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Implementing these styles could help school management initiate programs supporting teacher development and addressing students' socio-emotional needs, thereby enriching the overall educational experience. The mix of diverse leadership styles further promises a holistic culture that nurtures learning, growth, and academic excellence in Gaborone's secondary schools. By integrating participatory decision-making, inspiration, support, goal orientation, and personalized guidance, these schools set a robust foundation for a culture of achievement among both students and faculty.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure effective leadership practices at schools in Gaborone, it is imperative to establish comprehensive training programs tailored to educational settings. These programs should encompass various leadership styles to equip school leaders with adaptable skills for diverse situations. Additionally, robust support networks must be created to provide mentorship, guidance, and resources for teachers and students, fostering growth and success for all stakeholders. It is also critical to set clear and achievable objectives aligned with the school's vision, ensuring focus, accountability, and progress. Furthermore, prioritizing open channels for feedback from teachers, students, and parents is necessary to assess the effectiveness of leadership styles and enable

continuous refinement and improvement. Lastly, cultivating an inclusive environment that values and celebrates diverse leadership styles is essential, recognizing that diverse perspectives strengthen the school community.

CONCLUSION

In investigating the leadership practices within public secondary schools in Gaborone, valuable insights were unveiled as to how gender impacts on leadership decision-making. Through an exploration of multiple leadership styles including Transformational, Democratic, Servant, Transactional, and Coach-Style, the study identified a diverse range of approaches embraced by deputy or school heads, administrators, and department heads. Divergent patterns based on gender were observed, highlighting how male and female managers often favour different leadership styles. This shows their significance in shaping educational outcomes. The findings highlight the impact of gender on leadership preferences revealing an opportunity to cultivate a holistic leadership environment. This entails fostering inclusivity by integrating various leadership styles, including participatory decision-making, inspiration, support, goal orientation, and personalized guidance. Such an inclusive approach has the potential to notably enhance academic performance and overall success within educational institutions.

The quest to enhance public secondary education in Gaborone shows potential through the customization of leadership strategies. Within this customized leadership framework lies a versatile approach tuned to meet individuals' unique needs in these institutions. Through participatory decision-making, stakeholders collaboratively steer the school's direction, fostering a shared sense of ownership. An effective leadership approach is characterized by a supportive framework, providing direction, resources, clear objectives, and individualized support to enhance academic achievement and overall success in educational institutions.

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