

Head-Teachers' Leadership Styles Effect on Pupils' KCPE Performance: A Case Study of Imaroro Ward, Kajiado East Sub-County, Kenya

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Accepted: 10 June 2025 || Published: 16 June 2025

Abstract

This study aimed to find out how the leadership style of head teachers affected pupils' performance in KCPE exams in public primary schools in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County. The study was motivated by growing concerns over declining KCPE performance, where head teachers' leadership, teacher morale, resource management, and the ability to adapt to educational system changes were identified as major influencing factors. The study used a descriptive research design and the target population comprised 327 teachers and head teachers. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The study revealed that leadership styles significantly influenced the academic performance of pupils in KCPE exams, accounting for 51.4% of the total performance ($R^2 = .514$). Laissez-faire leadership style had the strongest positive effect on pupils' KCPE performance ($r = .727$, $\beta = .516$, $p = .035$), followed by transformational leadership style ($r = .689$, $\beta = .467$, $p = .024$), democratic leadership style ($r = .665$, $\beta = .387$, $p = .024$), and autocratic leadership style ($r = .335$, $\beta = .326$, $p = .008$). While laissez-faire leadership enhanced teacher autonomy and performance, democratic and transformational styles fostered inclusivity, vision-sharing, and innovation. In contrast, autocratic leadership negatively affected teacher morale and performance due to traits like intimidation and lack of consultation. There is a need to implement regular evaluations of headteachers' leadership styles to ensure alignment with best practices. Schools should promote a culture of innovation where headteachers encourage teachers to experiment with new teaching strategies and methodologies to improve pupil outcomes.

Keywords: *Head-Teachers, Leadership Styles, autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, transformational leadership, KCPE Performance*

How to Cite: Sitiol, D. L., Mwamba, G., & Kobuthi, E. N. (2025). Head-Teachers' Leadership Styles Effect on Pupils' KCPE Performance: A Case Study of Imaroro Ward, Kajiado East Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Human Resource & Leadership*. 5(1), 62-79.

1. Introduction

Global school academic accomplishment, among other factors, is determined by the quality of leadership and the leadership styles used by those chosen for leadership positions (Bett, et al., 2018). Leadership is described as the interpersonal efforts made in a situation that is directed through the communication process toward the attainment of specific organizational goals. Headteachers play a vital role in shaping the success of schools. Headteachers' expectations and roles have changed substantially over time (Mitchell et al., 2023). Mackey (2016) suggests

that headteachers are transitioning from traditional roles focused primarily on administrative duties to more dynamic roles as instructional leaders. This shift is crucial as it enhances their effect on student outcomes. In the context of public primary schools in Kenya, headteachers are instrumental in fostering an environment that encourages proper conduct, mutual respect, and effective time management among students. Their leadership is essential for ensuring adherence to school rules, which in turn supports academic performance. Additionally, Malonza (2020) suggests that effective leadership in schools can significantly increase the efficiency of learning by maximizing the potential of students. This kind of leadership not only guides but also inspires both students and teachers, creating an environment conducive to educational excellence.

In an educational facility, the head teacher oversees, puts together, coordinates, staffs, and plans activities throughout the institution. The head teacher plays a crucial role in guiding students toward their desired outcomes. A school's effectiveness is significantly dependent on the headteacher's talents, competence, dedication, and quality (Pamuji & Limei, 2023). The school's leadership is accountable for meeting its objectives. According to Ali and Abdulkadir (2015), leadership is essential for the growth and sustainability of any organization, be it a corporation or an institution. It is an essential component of educational administration because of its far-reaching effects on the attainment of school objectives and educational goals. Kiboss (2014) defined leadership as the capacity to complete tasks with the assistance of others inside the same organization, institution, or system. As a result, leadership is an activity in which the leader inspires and motivates people to complete tasks in line with specified standards, thus enabling the organization's goals to be met.

Leadership style is a set of approaches, attitudes, and abilities developed by headmasters based on four factors: values, trusting others, leadership direction, and a sense of security shaped in critical situations (Cornelissen, 2020). Every headmaster fulfills their key tasks in a unique manner that could set them apart from other headmasters. Huruni & Kaitila (2014) explained that several studies on management and organization have been conducted in relation to leadership, their styles, and how critical their performance and success are in the organization, affecting the structure and organizational process, forms of social dealings, member beliefs, behaviors, and job attitudes. According to Schott (2020), the main leadership attributes required for successful learner improvement must include effective communication, trustworthiness, decisiveness, positive and motivating attitudes, and encouragement of independent thinking. Effective communication connects students and teachers, allowing for greater transparency among students (Shen, 2020). Honesty is also an important trait that allows students to believe in their professors' sincerity and authenticity. This helps students embrace positive values and ethics, which improves their academic performance (Fitriah & Madjid, 2020). Leadership should also be decisive, as this is the foundation for exercising excellent judgment and valuing educated feedback from opposing viewpoints. Good leadership should also encourage independent thought, which means that leaders must use common sense while proposing answers to problems (Porter et al., 2022). Effective leadership should also be inspirational, as it encourages subjects to embrace the team's aims. This suggests that the Headteacher's leadership is a defining requirement for the best performance of students in Kenya's public elementary schools (Kilag, 2023).

Recently, educational leaders highlighted concerns about kids falling short on their educational certification examination (Orodho, 2014). Part of the blame for poor performance has been shifted to school officials (principals) and teachers, while another portion has been placed squarely on the shoulders of students and parents (Osangie & Okafor, 2013). Due to

stakeholder concerns about the academic performance of Kenyan schools (primary and secondary), the government, in collaboration with partners, implemented diploma in education management training for school principals via the Kenya Education Management Institute [KEMI] (Bii & Ogochi, 2023). According to Ndiga et al. (2014), this curriculum has been made mandatory for school administrators to equip them with competencies aimed at improving educational quality in Kenyan public schools. When a school performs well in K.C.P.E., the headteacher is praised; when it performs poorly, the headteacher is held responsible.

The goal of this study is to investigate the effects of head teacher leadership styles on student academic progress in Kenyan public primary schools. Leadership is essential in shaping educational results and practices. Headteachers play a central role in directing and motivating both teachers and students towards shared educational objectives, creating a nurturing environment that allows each student to excel. According to Mungai et al, (2018), successful headteachers do more than just lead; they effectively assign tasks that play to the individual strengths of students, significantly enhancing their performance. This study seeks to investigate how different leadership styles practiced by headteachers influence student learning and the overall performance of schools. The goal is to pinpoint the leadership practices that are most beneficial in the context of Kenyan education, providing insights that could guide school leaders in fostering improved educational outcomes.

1.1 Problem Statement

The success of an education system depends significantly on the quality and motivation of its teachers, who play a key role in achieving the goals and objectives of the system (Andende, 2016). Teachers are the backbone of any educational institution, and their effectiveness in the classroom directly influences learners' academic performance. However, the performance and commitment of teachers are often shaped by the nature of leadership they receive from their school administrators. In this context, effective leadership from head teachers becomes not just beneficial but essential. It enhances teacher performance by providing the necessary guidance, support, and motivation. This support structure allows every member of staff to contribute optimally to the school's mission of delivering high-quality and contemporary education that meets the demands of a changing world (Kapaya, 2013).

In Zambia, for instance, primary and secondary school principals apply various leadership styles in managing their institutions. These include authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles, each with distinct characteristics and implications (Andende, 2016). The choice of leadership style significantly affects how a school is managed, how teachers respond to administrative decisions, and ultimately how students perform academically. Each leadership style can either foster a supportive learning environment and teacher satisfaction or create challenges that jeopardize overall school performance and morale. Puspitadani et al. (2022) argue that leadership styles influence the degree to which schools can create effective learning environments, promote collaboration among teachers, and maintain student discipline and motivation, all of which are critical for academic achievement.

Primary school education is a cornerstone of any education system, shaping young minds by building essential skills in reading, writing, and math. It acts as a stepping stone to secondary education, which plays a vital role in driving a country's growth and progress (Eden et al., 2024). In primary school, exams like the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) are especially important. These results determine whether students are ready for the challenges of secondary school, influencing their future education and career paths. However, parents, communities, and other stakeholders are growing increasingly worried about how students are

performing in these critical exams. Many view the KCPE not only as a measure of student ability but also as a reflection of the overall effectiveness of school leadership and instruction (Mwangi, 2020).

Low pupil performance in KCPE examinations often results in public outcry, with school head teachers frequently blamed for poor results (Mulwa, 2014). These reactions highlight the central role that school leadership plays in student achievement. Headteachers are expected not only to manage school resources effectively but also to foster a learning environment that motivates both teachers and students to strive for excellence. Wasanga (2010) emphasizes that the management of any educational institution relies heavily on its leadership. The author further underscores the growing need for dynamic and adaptable headteachers in Kenyan schools, particularly in light of ongoing reforms and changes within the national education system. With the curriculum and educational policies continually evolving, school leaders must be capable of adjusting to these changes while maintaining focus on educational quality and student success.

Given these dynamics, this study aims to assess the extent to which the leadership styles adopted by headteachers; specifically, their ability to initiate structure, exhibit consideration behavior, and demonstrate effective organizational leadership impact student academic performance. School principals play a pivotal role in shaping how teachers connect with students, how the curriculum is presented, and how the overall school culture emerges. As Quinn (2002) emphasizes, headteachers are not just administrators; they are visionaries who set the tone for an education environment that's determined for excellence and fairness in education. Their leadership sets the school's ethos, its direction, and the direct influence on its performance.

The work by Waters et al. (2004) clearly *illustrates* the important connection existing between school leadership that is effective and noted betterments in how students do academically and also in their own growth as persons. How a school is managed, as their research *indicates*, can be a force that either pushes students to be involved and find success, or, on the other hand, it may block this from happening. Taking this as a starting point, the study right now *seeks* to look more closely at these particular forces—most of all, the way headteachers' leading styles affect what students achieve inside Kenyan schools.

Munyaira (2011), *formally* a District Education Officer in Kajiado North District, also found several problems that keep happening and that touch on school results in the Ngong Zone, especially when looking at KCPE and KCSE test scores. Among the difficulties that were brought up *were a lack* of leadership that acts first, not having good ways of handling resources (this means both people and items), managing time poorly, and bigger blockages in the whole system. These things that were seen *prompt* one to ask serious questions concerning what leadership does to help shape how well students can do.

For these reasons, this piece of research has a goal to study these different parts very carefully, and it has a bigger aim too: to give information that helps make school rules and ways of leading better, which *supports* students getting better results.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To establish the influence of head-teachers' autocratic leadership on pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado east sub-county, Kajiado County.
- ii. To establish the influence of head-teachers democratic leadership on pupil performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado east sub-county, Kajiado County.

- iii. To establish the influence of head-teachers' Laissez-faire leadership on pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado east sub-county, Kajiado County.
- iv. To establish how transformational leadership influences pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. How does the head teacher's autocratic leadership style influence pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County?
- ii. How does the head teachers' democratic leadership style influence pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County?
- iii. How does the head-teacher laissez-faire leadership style influence pupils' performance in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County?
- iv. How do head teachers' transformational leadership styles on pupils' performance in KCPE in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East sub-county, Kajiado County?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was supported by the Transformational theory: Burns (1978) conceptualized transformational leadership as a revolutionary approach that distinguishes leaders who engage deeply with the motivations of their followers from those whose relationships are primarily transactional. Unlike transactional leaders, who focus on exchanges and rewards, transformational leaders build strong, inspirational bonds with their followers, based on mutual trust, ethical standards, and shared vision. This leadership style emphasizes not just achieving organizational goals but also fostering the ethical and spiritual growth of individuals within the organization. Transformational leadership encourages a balanced power dynamic, where leaders and followers collaborate in the pursuit of common goals, thereby creating a sense of ownership and purpose across all levels of the organization. This philosophy creates a culture in which individuals feel empowered to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to organizational development (Arabiun et al., 2016).

At the heart of transformational leadership is the capacity to forge a strong commitment to the organization's mission while simultaneously empowering individuals to take initiative and embrace innovation. Transformational leaders are often seen as agents of change, capable of shaping organizational culture, influencing attitudes, and inspiring both managers and employees to exceed their usual expectations. According to Ching (2017), transformational leaders present novel ideas and perspectives, which serve as catalysts for organizational growth and long-term prosperity. Through their vision and influence, they cultivate commitment, passion, and loyalty within the workforce, motivating individuals to undertake significant changes aligned with the organization's strategic direction. This, in turn, equips organizations to navigate complex environments and attain higher levels of performance.

Transformational leaders possess a keen ability to identify and address the evolving needs of both the organization and its personnel. Their leadership approach involves more than just direction and control; it includes inspiring followers and satisfying their higher-order psychological needs, such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Anderson (2017) outlines the four core components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, where leaders serve as role models and earn admiration and respect; inspirational motivation, which enhances team enthusiasm and challenges individuals to strive for excellence; intellectual

stimulation, which fosters innovation and encourages followers to think critically and creatively; and individualized consideration, where leaders provide personalized support and mentorship to develop the potential of each team member.

This multifaceted leadership style enhances justice, inclusiveness, and mutual respect within the organizational setting, contributing to an improved quality of work life. Employees experience a heightened sense of value and recognition, which not only enhances their dignity and satisfaction but also promotes their growth and advancement. In contrast, organizations where leadership fails to uphold fairness and inclusivity may suffer from employee dissatisfaction, decreased motivation, and limited productivity, due to the demoralizing effects of perceived prejudice and injustice.

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, effective organizational management is more vital than ever before. It is not solely the responsibility of senior executives but also mid-level and junior managers to exhibit leadership capabilities and work collaboratively to achieve desired results. Managers must understand how to influence others positively, motivate performance, and take ownership of organizational outcomes. As Money (2017) emphasizes, successful leadership at all levels is a critical determinant of an organization's ability to navigate uncertainty and maintain competitive advantage.

Transformational leaders excel in aligning individual and organizational values, goals, and visions. They help employees internalize the mission of the organization, thereby boosting engagement and performance. These leaders are also adept at scanning the external environment, identifying emerging challenges and opportunities, and facilitating appropriate strategic responses. Avarsin et al. (2017) note that transformational leaders cultivate a clear and compelling vision of future opportunities, which they communicate effectively to their teams. By building consensus and commitment, they enable cultural transformation, strategic realignment, and more efficient use of resources.

Transformational leadership is key to boosting organizational success. Leaders with transformational qualities tend to inspire greater motivation, morale, and effectiveness among employees. Their ability to energize and unite people around common goals drives this impact. By encouraging innovation, building trust, and fostering a shared sense of purpose, these leaders cultivate strong, adaptable organizations poised for long-term achievement.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Autocratic Leadership Style

Authoritarian leadership also referred to as autocratic leadership, is characterized by a directive and forceful approach in which the leader dictates tasks to subordinates and strictly controls the means and ends of execution. This leadership style allows little to no room for subordinate input or autonomy, leading to a workplace environment where compliance is often motivated by fear rather than inspiration or collaboration. In practice, authoritarian leaders frequently instill fear and tension by reprimanding, intimidating, or demeaning subordinates over minor issues. As a result, communication is stifled, and subordinates may withhold critical information for fear of reprimand, contributing to declining morale and reduced team cohesion. The work by Maryam and others (2022) *examined* the way strong-hand leading affects how well schools do in Pakistan. A method using numbers *was* employed to collect the information that was needed from a selection of 30 school heads and 1,428 learners by means of carefully made survey questions. Opposite to the often-held bad views about bossy leading, what the study *discovered* was a good, though not very strong, connection between that style of rule and the school success of the young people. This result *suggests* that, at certain times, for example

when there are issues with student behavior or varying levels of expectation, a firm leading hand *can assist* in achieving school success by strictly making sure learning levels and hopes are met. Nevertheless, it is important to state, that the research mentioned *was undertaken* in Pakistan with a design based on numbers from real life, while this present study *is* being done in Kenya using a method that describes, which makes it less possible to directly compare the outcomes.

Similarly, a study done by Igwe, Ndidiamaka, and Chidi (2017) in Enugu, Nigeria, *also supports* the good effect of bossy leadership on students' school work. Making use of a design that looks back after things happened, which *includes* the use of question papers and talk guides, the people doing the research *find* a clear good link between using bossy leading ways and doing well in school. What the study found *does indicate* that using bossy leading in the right way can help with good behavior, skills for managing time, and making sure everyone follows the school plan aims, most of all in places where student actions are a problem or where there are not many things to use.

2.2.2 Democratic Leadership Style

In Pakistan, the 2017 survey by Alam examined the impact of different styles of leadership in influencing the educational process. The results established that democratic leadership was not only prevalent but also had a profound positive impact on the academic practices witnessed in the research schools. To a specific degree, the studies illustrated that democratic styles of leadership had a critical impact on the academic performance of the students. Alam's findings are consistent with world leadership theory that underscores the importance of involving participatory decision-making, in which the leader facilitates the engagement and involvement of teachers as well as students. The participatory process is likely to ensure an educational culture that encourages motivation, accountability, as well as active engagement, all of which are critical components leading to academic achievement.

Similarly, a more recent survey by Sun and Cheng in 2017 in the Chinese educational system identified a positive relationship between democratic leadership and academic motivation as well as engagement of primary school students. The findings of the survey underscored the mediating effect of the motivation of students in the relationship between democratic governance and academic achievement. As a result, democratic leadership was established to exert an indirect impact on academic achievement through the promotion of the motivation and engagement of students. In such learning institutions, democratic leaders promote a culture of learning in which students are treated as vital inputs, thus encouraging them to be active participants in the learning process. However, Sun and Cheng cautiously note that the effect of democratic leadership is subject to particular contextual variables as well as how the style of leading is implemented. They underscore the importance of school leaders carefully evaluating the unique needs, cultural conditions, as well as power dynamics of their learning communities before embracing or implementing democratic styles of leading. The context-sensitive approach ensures consistency between the practices of leaders and the existing conditions and thus maximizes their potential impact on learning achievement.

Nellitawati (2020) examined the influence of democratic leadership styles of principals on the effectiveness of teachers in the Indonesian context. The outcomes from the research did reveal a positive and notable connection, it is, between democratic ways of managing and how teachers perform. This implies that such leadership forms assist in maximizing the output of educators, which, in turn, positively influences student academic showings. The data for this research were gathered; a questionnaire was used, based upon a quantitative research method with a sample comprising 86 primary school teachers. Findings presented within the paper did

prove that democratic leading helps maintain a professional setting where teachers are supported and feel empowered, thus they become more motivated and contribute towards quality teaching. Given that the effectiveness of teaching is the most critical variable affecting student learning results, this paper does highlight democratic leadership's capacity to indirectly foster academic achievement; this is through providing good work conditions and improved teaching performance.

2.2.3 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

The study by Nguyen and Glover (2017), which examined laissez-faire leadership actions within Vietnam's public sector, did reveal quite significant harmful effects on organizational wellness. Their research did ascertain that leadership of the laissez-faire type not only weakens workplace spirit but also contributes to an increase in incidents of harassment at the work location. Paradoxically, the investigation also did observe a positive connection between leadership that is laissez-faire and the psychological well-being of employees, while at the same time identifying a negative link with bullying in the workplace. This finding, which appears contradictory, does underscore the complex goings-on at play when laissez-faire leadership is present. An absence of sufficient supervision and the enforcement of workplace rules, particularly those rules designed to prohibit bullying actions by principals and other leaders, does create an environment in which bullying can indeed thrive. De Wet (2010) supports this particular viewpoint, highlighting that teachers are often the victims of bullying inside schools. Laissez-faire leadership is frequently seen in a negative light within educational environments because it fosters stress in the workplace, especially when teachers find themselves subjected to bullying without any appropriate help. This leadership style's inability to provide guidance and proper oversight can, therefore, make negative workplace dynamics much worse, thereby undermining both the well-being of teachers and the school's overall atmosphere.

In India, Phiri (2022) undertook a study; this study linked leadership of the laissez-faire kind to some of the most worrying signs of school problems, including the very highest rates of students skipping school and student misbehavior. The study additionally found that schools that were governed by laissez-faire leaders showed the lowest amounts of improvement in their performance. This style of leadership was demonstrated to create unproductive ways of thinking and widespread feelings of having no power among employees, teachers in particular. Leaders who do adopt a laissez-faire way tend to ignore, or they completely avoid, their duties, this results in a severe lack of motivation and disengagement among the teachers. Such disengagement does negatively affect their effectiveness in teaching and their commitment to student results. Leadership of this nature is especially damaging in primary school settings, where active watching and oversight are very critical for maintaining discipline, academic attention, and the accountability of teachers. Phiri's study, therefore, does emphasize the risks that are associated with leadership styles that give up responsibility instead of providing clear direction and support.

In Tanzania, Isundwa (2015) investigated the effects that leadership qualities have on the academic performance of pupils in secondary schools located in Morogoro township. The findings were in agreement with other research; they indicated that laissez-faire leadership does exert a significant negative influence on the performance of students. The study did highlight that leaders who are laissez-faire frequently do not warn or correct those under them when mistakes or shortcomings happen, as they have a tendency to delegate responsibilities too much without any follow-up or ensuring accountability. This not-doing-much way does result in school work being poor, as vital teaching and office jobs are not attended to. John and Mkulu

(2020) make this idea stronger, stating how that leadership which is laissez-faire, is not a good kind of managing for school heads. An emphasis they do make: giving all tasks away with not enough checking after, this creates troubles for how students do. However, a noting is also done by John and Mkulu; when teachers and pupils have freedom for choices inside a watched plan, their want to do well, it does increase. A pushing for a leadership style is what they support, one that joins together teachers' and students' ideas with careful watching of work by school people, because this path, has shown it improves school order and learning results well.

2.2.4 Transformational Leadership

In the lands of America, a full telling of how leadership that changes things makes workers do better through making them want to, giving them ideas, and making a dream everyone shares, was given by Bass and Riggio. Their looking into things, did show that leaders who change things, give ideas, and make their followers want to do things by growing a clear feeling of what they are for and a dream for all. The power of such leaders to say a goal that is nice and has meaning, put together with their giving of smart challenges, works to make the inner want-to of followers better. This bigger inner want-to, becomes more trying, more doing, and more sticking to jobs given. So, leadership that changes things, has a good effect on doing well because people are more likely to put in power and care to reach the leader's shared aims. This way of leading, thus helps grow a habit of sticking to things and being excited, where workers or followers are pushed to do more than just what is looked for.

Bass and Riggio, they did also said that the part of giving ideas is in leadership that changes things, it touches the job by making feelings of being thrilled, keen, and committed come up in followers. By reaching into the feelings of followers, leaders who change things, they make a good feeling state that makes doing and caring for work better. This feeling links to work, it helps grow a strong feeling of being one with the group's goals, which then makes the job doing better all around. The feeling of power made by leadership that gives ideas, helps followers stay on track, be strong, and keep wanting to do things even when it is hard. The higher feeling of doing that is pushed by this leadership way, it is then a main way that better job happens, as people become more ready to go past basic needs and try for the best.

Even though the points from Bass and Riggio, were mostly based in workplaces and business areas, their main ideas can be used more widely, in schools places too. For a case, Osagie and Momoh (2013) did a study in Edo State, Nigeria; this showed that school heads who used leadership that changed things did well in making both teachers and students want to reach goals. By always saying how important doing goals is, these heads, helped teachers do their jobs as they should and got students actively into the learning way. This leadership approach was linked to improved academic outcomes and sound scholarship. However, while Osagie and Momoh's study produced findings comparable to those in organizational research, it also exposed certain limitations related to research design and sampling techniques that might affect the generalizability of results.

3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive research methodology. The study takes place in Imaroro ward, Kajiado East constituency, Kajiado County. According to the Kajiado County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022. According to the 2020 Basic Education Statistical Report, there are 147 public primary schools in the Kajiado East Constituency. The report further indicates that the total number of public primary schools within Imaroro ward is 27 consisting of a total of 27 head teachers and of 300 teachers. This formed a total target population of 327. Purposive sampling was used to acquire data from Head instructors, while Clustered random sampling

was used to obtain data from the remaining 81 instructors. 9 schools were randomly selected per location to form part of the sample size, and 3 teachers were then randomly selected from the sampled schools. Primary data for this study was gathered through semi-structured questionnaires. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Headteachers' Leadership Styles and Pupils' KCPE Performance

Figure 1 shows the summary of the relationship between KCPE performance and different leadership styles. An analysis of variance between the headteacher's leadership styles and the KCPE performance indicated that the headteacher's leadership styles contributed significantly to the KCPE performance of the pupils ($f = .992$, $p = 0.23$) at a 95 % confidence level. Thus, there was enough statistical evidence to suggest that the school KCPE performance was a result of the headteachers' leadership styles with schools whose headteachers applied Laissez-faire, Transformational, and Democratic leadership styles performing better (Average mean score of 255, 252, and 250 respectively) compared to the ones that applied autocratic leadership style (Average mean score of 244). This indicated that the likelihood of a school performing better was higher among the schools whose headteachers applied the Laissez-faire leadership styles compared to other leadership styles.

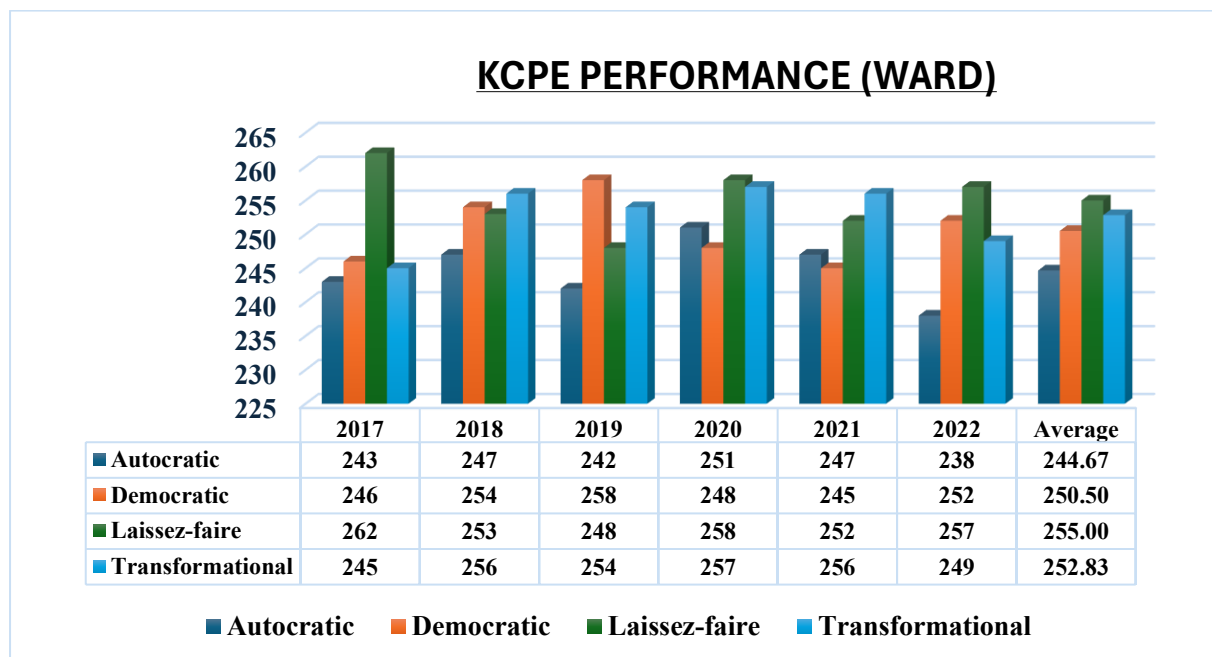


Figure 1: Headteachers' leadership styles and pupils' KCPE performance

4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Autocratic Leadership Style

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of head teachers autocratic leadership style on pupils' performance in KCPE. The teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with statements regarding their headteachers' autocratic leadership style on a scale of 1 -5 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses on Autocratic leadership style

Statement	Numbers	Mean	STD DEV
My Head-teacher regularly tells me what to do and how to do it	72	2.746	1.245
I always feel demeaned, intimidated, bullied, and terrified when addressing my head teacher.	72	2.362	1.122
My head teacher does not take other teachers' opinions.	72	2.663	1.023
In case of a mistake my head teacher bashes and blames me for it.	72	2.425	1.461
My head teacher applies an autocratic form of leadership that generally affects my performance and that of the pupils negatively.	72	3.223	1.204
Average	31.46 %	2.684	1.211

As shown in Table 1, 43.9 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 2.746 and 1.245 respectively agreed that their headteachers regularly tell them what to do and how to do it while 32.2 % disagreed with this statement. This indicated that some headteachers have employed an autocratic leadership style. Despite 43.4 % of the teachers disagreeing that they always feel demeaned, intimidated, bullied, and terrified when addressing my head teacher, a substantial 38.2 % agreed with this statement. This generated a mean and a standard deviation of 2.362 and 1.122 respectively indicating that key elements of autocratic leadership styles are being employed by the teachers. Further, the statistics showed that 46.8 % of the Headteachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 2.663 and 1.023 respectively do not take the opinions of their teachers indicating key aspects of autocratic leadership. A substantial number of teachers (35.1 %) also agreed that they get bashed and blamed for any mistakes which is a key trait of autocratic leadership. Further, 50.2 % of the teachers with a mean and a standard deviation of 3.223 and 1.204 respectively agreed that their head teacher applies an autocratic form of leadership that generally affects their performance and that of the pupils negatively. This shows that autocratic leadership is one of the commonly applied forms of leadership and it is affecting the pupils' performance negatively.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics on Democratic Leadership Style

The second objective of the study was to determine the influence of head teachers' democratic leadership style on pupil's performance in KCPE. The teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with statements regarding their headteachers' democratic leadership style on a scale of 1 -5 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses on Democratic leadership style

Statement	Numbers	Mean	STD DEV
My head teacher frequently consults and empowers teachers to freely express their opinions.	72	3.054	1.325
My head teacher advocates for the participation of teachers in decision-making.	72	3.103	1.234
My head teacher considers my needs, rights, and interests.	72	3.184	1.201
My head teacher advocates frequent staff meetings for cohesion	72	2.865	1.376
My head teacher applies a democratic form of leadership that generally affects my morale and performance positively	72	3.243	1.123
Average	72	3.090	1.252

The analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that 40.5 % of the teachers agreed that they are frequently consulted and empowered to freely express their opinions. This generated a mean and a standard deviation of 3.054 and 1.325 respectively indicating key elements of democratic leadership style. Majority of the teachers (43.2 %) generating a mean and standard deviation of 3.103 and 1.234 respectively agreed that their headteachers involve them in decision-making, another indicator of democratic leadership. Further, the statistics indicated that 42.1 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 184 and 1.201 agreed that their personal needs, rights, and interests are taken into consideration by their head teachers during decision-making reflecting key aspects of democratic leadership. Frequent staff meetings that boost cohesion because of consultation are a key part of the headteacher's leadership styles according to 38.1 % of the teachers. This generated a mean and a standard deviation of 2.865 and 1.376 respectively indicating employment of another key component of democratic leadership style. Almost half (48.3 %) of the teachers agreed that their headteachers applied a democratic type of leadership style that generally affects their morale and performance positively. This generated a mean and standard deviation of 3.243 and 1.123 respectively indicating that democratic leadership is one of the commonly applied leadership styles and it affects the performance of the pupils positively.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics on Laissez-faire leadership style

The third objective of the study was to examine the influence of head-teachers' Laissez-faire leadership style on pupils' performance in KCPE. The teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with statements regarding their headteachers' Laissez-faire leadership style on a scale of 1 -5 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses on Laissez-faire leadership style

Statement	Numbers	Mean	STD DEV
I am given total authority to make decisions and monitor my work.	72	3.48	1.226
My head teacher supplies the materials I need to teach and leaves me to deliver	72	2.62	1.203
There is minimal interference and supervision from the headteacher	72	3.13	1.187
My head teacher allows consultations at any given time and gives freedom to perform activities freely	72	3.58	1.265
My head teacher applies a Laissez-faire leadership form of leadership that generally affects my morale and performance positively	72	3.72	1.320
Average	72	3.306	1.240

About half of the teachers (52.4%) generating a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.226 admitted that they are given total authority to make decisions and monitor their work reflecting a key aspect of Laissez-faire leadership style. About 38 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 2.62 and 1.203 respectively agreed that their head teacher supplies the materials they need to teach and leaves them to deliver. This reflects one of the most common traits of the Laissez-faire leadership style. The analysis further indicates that 44.8 % of the teachers generated a mean and a standard deviation of 3.13 and 1.187 indicating that there is minimal interference and supervision from their head-teacher. Majority of the teachers (52.4 %) generating a mean and a standard deviation of 3.58 and .265 respectively also agreed that their head teacher allows consultations at any given time and gives them the freedom to perform activities freely. In terms of the effectiveness of the Laissez-faire leadership styles, majority of the teachers (58.2 %) generated a mean and a standard deviation of 3.72 and 1.320 respectively indicating that their head-teacher applies Laissez-faire leadership form of leadership that generally affects their morale and performance positively. This shows that Laissez-faire is one of the most effective leadership styles in improving the performance of the teachers and consequently that of the pupils in KCPE exams.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics on Transformational leadership style

The fourth objective of the study was to establish how transformational leadership style influences pupil's performance in KCPE. The teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with statements regarding their headteachers' transformational leadership style on a scale of 1 -5 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses on Transformational leadership style

Statement	Numbers	Mean	STD DEV
My headteacher has unique and special personalities that are adorable and easy to follow	72	2.362	1.307
The head teacher frequently develops the school vision and shares it with teachers for its implementation.	72	2.785	1.103
The head teacher influences the teacher's performance through motivation and inspiration.	72	3.065	1.211
The head teacher advocates for innovations and creativity in teaching activities.	72	2.885	1.234
My head teacher applies a transformational leadership form of leadership that generally affects performance positively	72	3.752	1.004
Average	72	2.970	1.172

As shown in Table 4, 43.4 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of disagreed 2.362 and 1.307 with the argument that their headteacher has unique and special personalities that are adorable and easy to follow indicating low adoption of transformation of leadership style. However, majority (36.8 %) of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 2.785 and 1.103 respectively argued that their head teacher frequently develops the school vision and shares it with teachers for its implementation which is one of the key characteristics of transformational leadership style. Also, 38.6 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 3.065 and 1.211 respectively agreed that the head teacher influences performance by motivation and inspiration reflecting yet another component of transformational leadership style. Promotion of innovation and creativity also emerged as one of the key aspects of transformational leadership styles with majority (34.8 %) of the teachers agreeing that their head teacher advocates for innovations and creativity in teaching activities. In terms of its effectiveness in improving performance, 42.5 % of the teachers generating a mean and a standard deviation of 3.752 and 1.004 respectively indicated that their head-teacher applies a transformational leadership style that generally affects their performance and that of the pupils positively.

4.6 Regression Analysis

The research study explored how the head teachers' leadership styles (X) (Autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, and transformational leadership style) affect students' KCPE performance in Kajiado East sub-county Imaroro ward (Y). The independent variables were represented as Autocratic leadership style = X1, democratic leadership style = X2, laissez-faire leadership style = X3, and transformational leadership style = X4. The results are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.789a	0.514	0.530	1.406

a. Independent variables: (Constant): X1, X2, X3, and X4

The model summary indicates that there was sufficient statistical evidence to support the notion that the headteachers' leadership styles contributed to pupils' performance in KCPE exams. The analysis shows that the headteachers' leadership styles (Autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, and transformational leadership style) account for 51.4 % of the pupils' performance in KCPE exams ($R^2 = .514$). This also suggests that 48.6 % of the pupils' performance in KCPE exams is caused by other factors that are not related to the headteachers' leadership styles. The findings from your study are consistent with the research by Kosgei et al. (2018), who found that leadership styles, were positively associated with improved academic performance.

The constant value (0.304) as shown in Table 6 is greater than (0.05 alpha values) and therefore insignificant. This resulted in to use of the standardized beta coefficient values instead of the unstandardized ones to determine the statistical relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 6: Regression of Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
1	(Constant)	0.304	.462		3.222	.006
	X1 (Autocratic leadership style)	.321	.079	.326	.406	.008
	X2 (Democratic leadership style)	.372	.109	.387	1.396	.024
	X3 (Laissez-faire leadership style)	.485	.106	.516	.735	.035
	X4 (Transformational leadership style)	.413	.086	.467	.912	.019

a. Dependent Variable: Pupils' KCPE performance

As shown in Table 6, autocratic leadership style had the lowest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta_1 = .326$, $P = .008$) compared to the other leadership styles. This indicates that an increase in autocratic leadership style by a single unit will lead to an increase of 0.326 units in pupils' performance in KCPE exams. This suggests that headteachers who rely heavily on autocratic leadership may have a limited influence on improving students' academic performance compared to those who adopt more participatory or flexible leadership approaches. Therefore, autocratic leadership style is the least important predictor of KCPE performance, implying that other leadership styles, such as laissez-faire, transformational, and democratic leadership, play a more substantial role in enhancing pupils' academic performance. This aligns with Bett et al. (2016), who found a negative relationship between autocratic leadership and academic performance, suggesting that autocratic leadership is less effective in improving student outcomes.

Democratic leadership style had a standardized beta coefficient of ($\beta_2 = .387$, $P = .024$) indicating that an increase in democratic leadership style by a single unit will lead to an increase of 0.387

units in pupils' performance in KCPE exams. While it contributed more than autocratic leadership, its effect was lower than that of laissez-faire and transformational leadership styles. This suggests that democratic leadership plays a significant role in improving pupils' academic performance, but other leadership styles may have a stronger influence.

Laissez-faire leadership style had the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta_3=.516$, $P=.035$) indicating that an increase in laissez-faire leadership style by a single unit will lead to an increase of 0.516 units in pupils' performance in KCPE exams. This suggests that headteachers who adopt a laissez-faire leadership approach; create an environment that significantly enhances academic performance. The findings imply that granting teachers greater independence in decision-making and instructional strategies may foster a more effective learning atmosphere, leading to improved student outcomes. Therefore, laissez-faire leadership style is the most important predictor of KCPE performance, highlighting its crucial role in shaping students' academic performance. This is consistent with research by Igwe et al. (2017), who found that laissez-faire leadership was linked to higher academic performance. Igwe et al. argued that granting teachers more autonomy in decision-making can create a more effective and motivating learning environment, leading to better student outcomes.

Transformational leadership style had a standardized beta coefficient of ($\beta_4=.467$, $P=.024$) indicating that an increase in Transformational leadership style by a single unit will lead to an increase of 0.467 units in pupils' performance in KCPE exams. It was the second most significant predictor after laissez-faire leadership, contributing more than both democratic and autocratic leadership styles. This suggests that headteachers who inspire, motivate, and foster a vision for academic excellence create an environment that enhances students' performance. The findings highlight the importance of transformational leadership in driving meaningful academic improvements. Cumulatively, the aggregate standardized beta coefficient of 0.424 suggests that an increase in the four headteachers' leadership styles by a single unit will result in an increase in pupils' performance in KCPE exams by 0.424 units. The model below can thus be used to calculate and predict pupils' performance in KCPE exams based on the headteachers' leadership styles.

5. Conclusion

The study explored the influence of headteachers' leadership styles; autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transformational on pupils' performance in KCPE exams in Imaroro Ward, Kajiado East Sub-County. The findings revealed that headteachers' leadership styles significantly contribute to KCPE performance, accounting for 51.4% of the variance. The autocratic leadership style negatively affected performance due to its lack of inclusivity and teacher intimidation, while the democratic leadership style positively influenced pupils' performance by fostering teacher morale, innovation, and collaboration. Laissez-faire leadership had the most substantial positive effect on performance, as it allowed teachers greater autonomy, which improved both teacher and pupil performance. Transformational leadership also had a strong positive effect on pupil's performance, motivating and inspiring teachers and pupils towards academic excellence. Overall, the study concluded that a balanced approach to leadership, integrating the positive aspects of different leadership styles, is essential for improving pupils' academic performance, with other contributing factors, such as resource allocation and socio-economic challenges, also playing a significant role in achieving holistic educational performance.

6. Recommendations

Encourage Democratic Leadership Practices: Headteachers should actively involve teachers in decision-making processes, promote collaboration, and seek teachers' opinions to foster a more inclusive and supportive school environment. This has been shown to improve pupil performance significantly.

Implement Transformational Leadership Strategies: Headteachers should focus on motivating and inspiring teachers by developing shared visions and promoting innovation and creativity in teaching practices. This approach boosts both teacher morale and pupil outcomes.

Limit Autocratic Leadership Practices: While some level of guidance is necessary, excessive use of autocratic leadership styles negatively affects teacher morale and pupil performance. Schools should focus on fostering a more participative and empowering leadership style.

Enhance Teacher Autonomy and Support: Laissez-faire leadership has shown strong positive effects on pupil performance. Therefore, headteachers should provide teachers with adequate support and autonomy to implement effective teaching methods.

Professional Development and Training: Continuous professional development and training for headteachers on effective leadership practices are essential to improve their leadership skills, particularly in adopting and balancing various leadership styles.

Regular Performance Evaluations: Implement regular evaluations of headteachers' leadership styles to ensure alignment with best practices. Data from these evaluations can guide adjustments and improvements in leadership approaches.

Encourage Innovation and Creativity: Schools should promote a culture of innovation where headteachers encourage teachers to experiment with new teaching strategies and methodologies to improve pupil outcomes.

6.1 Areas for Further Study

The findings indicate that 58.6% of the variation in pupils' KCPE performance is attributable to factors beyond headteachers' leadership styles. Further research could focus on socio-economic conditions, parental involvement, teacher qualifications, and school infrastructure to understand their contribution to academic performance.

Investigating how headteachers' leadership styles vary between urban and rural schools, private and public institutions, or regions with differing socio-economic contexts could provide deeper insights into how context influences the effectiveness of leadership styles on pupil performance.

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