

Influence of Head Teachers Leadership Style on School Climate - Perspectives of Head Teachers and Teachers

Charity Ngoma¹, Leonard Sakakombe², Rachel Kabeta³

Mulungushi University, School of Education

Abstract: *This study examined the influence of head teachers' leadership styles on school climate in selected secondary schools in Ndola district in Zambia. The study employed a descriptive study design which involved quantitative research. Random sampling was used to select the secondary schools and the 99 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select the education administrators. The total study sample was 126. Questionnaires were used to collect data. SPSS Version 21 and Excel were used to analyze data through which descriptive statistics in form of statistical tables and charts were generated. The findings showed that the most prevalent leadership style in the selected secondary schools is the democratic leadership style. Eight out of the ten variables show that the most prevalent school climate in the selected schools was positive while 2 out of 10 variables showed that the school climate was negative. The above statistics revealed that the most prevalent school climate in the selected schools was positive. The findings further exhibited that there was a strong linear negative correlation ($r = -0.73$) between the leadership style exhibited by Head teachers and School Climate in the selected secondary schools in Ndola district. ($r = -.073$, $n = 126$, $p = 0.414$). The value of $p > 0.05$, supported the null hypothesis of no relationship indicating that the relationship between leadership style and school climate was not statistically significant. The study recommends more capacity building trainings for head teachers in education management and leadership.*

Keywords: Leadership style, School climate, Influence, Head teachers, Teachers

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The success of any organization can be attributed in part to the type of leadership that prevails in it as it fosters the creation of a conducive working environment in which the employees exist. Eshbach & Henderson (2010) state that the success of a school is largely dependent upon the leadership style which may help to develop a positive school climate. Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. It includes the total pattern of explicit and implicit actions performed by the leader (Newstrom, 2003). In secondary schools, the head teacher is the leader who coordinates, keeps balance and ensures the harmonious development of the whole institution by setting a pace for the achievement of organizational goals. According to Shailly, 2012, the relationship between leadership style of principals and school climate in India for example, is that the head teachers' leadership behavior may help to establish a school climate with conditions that contain high level of staff interrelationships and student trust. Halpin, (2000) describes school climate as the prevalent teaching and learning environment in the school which is achieved by the association between the head teacher and teachers, among teachers and students and students and between the head teacher and students and is mostly initiated by the head teacher and influences the way teachers and pupils perform their obligations in the school. School climate may be described as the prevalent atmosphere set to achieve goals emanating from the blend of beliefs, values and attitudes of pupils, staff, and parents within a school setting. It has a great influence on the success of the teachers as well as student achievement (Halpin, 2006). Therefore, it is essential that head teachers develop leadership styles that

enhance a school's climate, which in turn, helps in meeting the mandates of a nation. In addition, according to Hoy & Miskel, (2000), these leadership styles might ultimately lead to increased staff job satisfaction and overall improvement of the school's climate.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A number of studies in developed countries have demonstrated that head teachers play a major role in establishing school climate. Parson (2007) states that, the creation of any school climate starts with the principal and is reflected in his relationship with school members and the ethos of the school. A positive school climate requires leadership roles that border on accountability by creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make important decisions. The Ministry of General Education in Zambia National Policy on Education (1996) asserts that, effectiveness in the delivery of education depends heavily on the quality of educational administration. However, it seems that not so many studies have been done in Zambia on the relationship between the head teachers' leadership style and school climate. This study therefore examined the influence of the head teachers' leadership style and school climate from the perspectives of both head teachers and teachers.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the head teachers' leadership style on school climate from the perspectives of both head teachers and teachers.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

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- 1) Assess the perceptions of Head teachers and teachers about the leadership styles of the head teacher in the selected secondary schools.
- 2) Examine the type of school climate prevailing in the selected secondary schools.
- 3) Establish whether there is a significant correlation between the head teachers' leadership style and the school climate.

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the study may be of benefit to the Ministry of General Education to formulate policy guidance based on the recommendations. The findings may further boost the knowledge capacity for school leaders and education administrators in the area of leadership styles and school climate. The study also sets up a stage for further studies in leadership styles and school climate.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Leadership

Leadership is essential to an organization because it provides guidance in times of change and enhances the effectiveness of organizations. According to Yukl (2010) leadership has been incorporated into the technical vocabulary of organizational studies without being precisely defined. Kouzes (2017) defines leadership as an observable pattern of practices and behaviours and a definable set of skills and abilities. Leadership is defined as a process where an individual influences others to willingly and enthusiastically direct their efforts and abilities towards attaining defined group or organizational goals. Daresh (2002) describes leadership as the ability to inspire confidence and support followers who are expected to achieve organizational goals. Hoy & Miskel (2001) define leadership as the art of transforming people and organization with the aim of improving the organization.

2.1.1 Importance of Leadership

Leadership is important in organizations. Daft (2011) contends that without proper leadership, effective performance cannot be realised in schools. Leadership involves working with and through people so as to accomplish organizational goals. The effectiveness of a school or any organization revolves around the quality of the head teacher. In various ways the head teacher is the most cardinal and influential individual in the school environment. It is the head teachers' leadership style, communication skills and decision making that sets the base of the school, the climate for teaching and learning process and the morale of the teachers (Dean, 1995).

2.1.2 Leadership Style

Scholl (2000) refers to leadership style as the pattern of behaviour used by a leader in attempting to influence group members and make decision regarding the mission strategy and operation of group activities. Clark (2000) perceived leadership style as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Various leadership styles are prevalent in secondary schools around the globe and these include democratic, autocratic

and laissez-faire. Mbiti (2007) relates that the leadership styles associated with educational administration are: autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez faire leadership and participatory leadership styles. However, the study by Mbiti, (2007) did not explore the leadership styles in secondary schools.

A study conducted in Zambia by Mwanza's (2004) on the management styles employed by effective head teachers found that 80% of them, perceived their head teachers to exercise the democratic style of management while 17% perceived their head teachers to practice autocratic while three (3%) percent perceived that their head teachers exercised a laissez-faire type of leadership style. Mwanza's results provide evidence of the dominance of the democratic leadership style. Mwanza's (2004) study also concluded that effective head teachers exercised all the three management styles (democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire) depending on the prevailing situation. This means the head teacher is privileged to assess the situation before he/she exercised the management style. The findings also supported participative leadership through delegation of duties and shared decision making by the head teacher. However, the study by Mwanza (2004) did not establish the relationship between leadership style and school climate.

2.2 The Concept of Prevailing School Climate

The study of school climate across the globe dates back in history. Perry (1908) was the first educationist to unequivocally expound on how school atmosphere influences the teaching and learning process of students and teachers as a whole. Each school has an atmosphere that is different from other schools and influences conduct and sentiments of teachers and learners for that school (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988). The National School Climate Council (2007) characterizes school climate as standards, qualities, and desires that bolster individuals feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. School climate is in this manner as a result of the interpersonal connections among learners, families, teachers, and administrators, school climate can therefore be described as the prevalent teaching and learning environment in the school which is achieved by the association between the school managers and teachers, among teachers and students and between the head and students. Haplin, (2006) states that school climate is mostly initiated by the head and influences the way teachers and pupils perform their obligations in the school.

Mentz (2002) describes the various forms of school climate including open, closed and controlled climate as follows; "an open climate refers to a climate where there is transparency between the principal and the members of staff because of mutual trust." The teachers in turn have a similar form of open communication with the learners and the learners can confide in teachers about their personal and educational problems. Mentz (2002) further points out that the school environment is characterised by a high degree of mutual trust and motivation because of the high morale among staff, and learners and management. This is the climate that is conducive to quality teaching and learning because of the commitment shown by various stakeholders.

With regards to Controlled Climate, Mentz (2002) describes it as a task-oriented environment that offers little opportunity for the promotion of social relations. Mentz (2002) maintains that morale remains high in this climate because it remains open, but like the climate of autonomy there needs to be a balance between task and people-centred activities. According to Mentz (2002) a closed climate is the direct opposite of an open climate. Neither the staff, nor the learners are involved in teaching and learning activities. Staff turnover is low and there is low job satisfaction.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows both the leadership style (independent variables: democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire) and the type of school climate that is yielded (Dependent variable: negative or positive climate). The study proposed a framework that included “Intervening variables” as the intermediate process in determining the school climate in the manner depicted in figure 1 below.

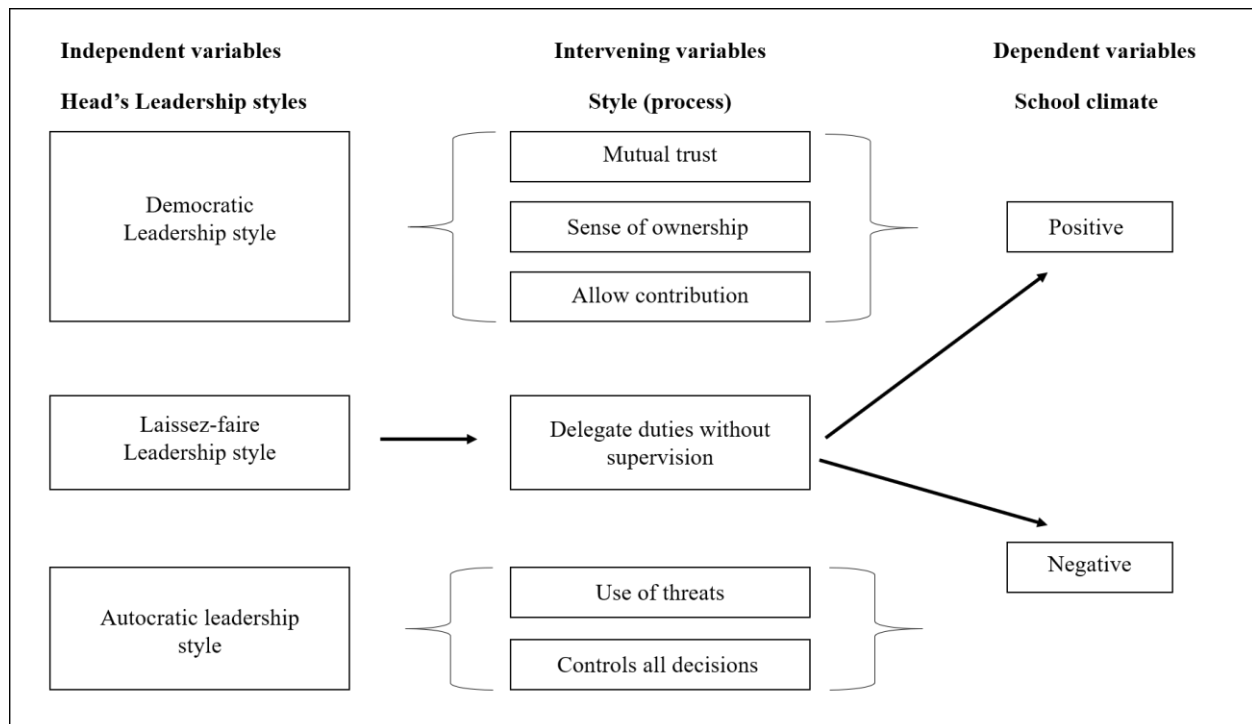


Figure 1: The Relationship between leadership style and School Climate

Source: Author- Field work 2019/ Amedome 2018

4. Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive study design involving the quantitative approach.

Target Population

The target population of this study was all the teachers and head teachers in the selected secondary schools.

Sample Size

The Yamane formula (1967) was used to calculate the sample size. The total sample size was 126 participants.

Sampling Procedure

The study employed the methodological triangulation in which both probability and non- probability sampling techniques were used to select the participants. The methods included purposive and random sampling. The multi- stage sampling technique was used to arrive at the five schools, from the 9 zones in the district. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the 99 teachers from the five secondary schools. Purposive sampling was employed to select the 5 head teachers, 5 deputy head teachers and 17 heads of departments.

Reliability of Research Instruments

To ensure reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with some teachers who never participated in the study.

Research Tools and Data Collection Procedures

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants in the study. 15 related statements based on a five-point Likert scale was prepared and administered.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data that was collected through the questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. Descriptive statistics in form of frequencies tables, mode and charts were generated. The data was coded into themes and sub-themes that emerged. Pearson Product- Moment correlation was used to measure the significant relationship that exists between leadership style and school climate.

5. Presentations of Findings

The findings from the field were presented according to the objectives of the study.

Research Objective 1:

This objective sought to assess the perceptions of the head teachers and teachers on the head teachers' leadership style.

Table 1: School - Leadership style Cross Tabulation

| Name of school | Leadership style | | | Total |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| | Autocratic | Laissez-Faire | Democratic | |
| School A | 09 (40.9%) | 0 (0%) | 13 (59.1%) | 22 (100%) |
| School B | 0 (0%) | 10 (34.5%) | 19 (65.5%) | 29 (100%) |
| School C | 05 (20%) | 03 (12%) | 17 (68%) | 25 (100%) |
| School D | 06 (24%) | 01(4%) | 18(72%) | 25 (100%) |
| School E | 03 (12%) | 04 (16%) | 18 (72%) | 25 (100%) |
| TOTAL | 23 (18.3%) | 18 (14.3%) | 85 (67.5%) | 126(100%) |

Source: Author- Field Survey (October, 2019).

The results presented in Table 4.3 showed that majority 13 (59.1%) of participants from school A indicated that the leadership style of the head teacher in that school is democratic, while 09 (40.9%) perceived the school manager to exhibit an autocratic leadership style. At School B, 19 (65.5%) indicated that the perceived leadership style of the head teacher was democratic while 10 (34.5%) described the leadership style of the head teacher as laissez-faire. The results further revealed that majority 17 (68%) of the participants at School C described the leadership style of their head teacher as democratic, 05 (20%) perceived the leadership style as autocratic while 03 (12 %) described the leadership style as laissez-faire.

Moreover at school D 18 (72 %)of the participants perceived the leadership style of their head teacher as democratic,

while 06 (24 %) perceived the leadership style of the school manager as autocratic and 01 (4 %) perceived the leadership style of the head teacher as laissez-faire. Lastly at school E 03 (12 %) of the participants perceived the leadership style of the school manager as autocratic, 04 (16 %) perceived the leadership style as laissez-faire while the majority 18 (72 %), perceived the leadership style of the school manager as democratic. Data regarding teacher's perceptions on the prevalent leadership style in schools is presented figure 4.3.

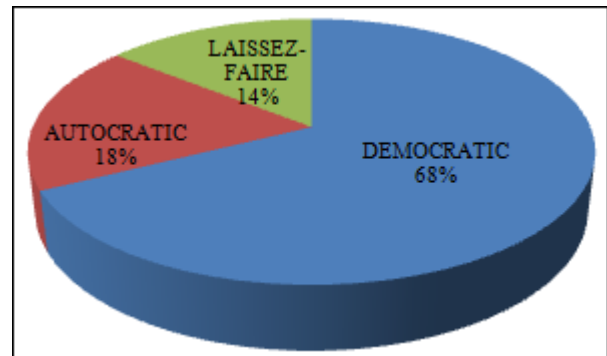


Figure 2: Participants perceptions on the prevalent leadership styles in schools

Source: Author- Field Survey (October, 2019).

Research Objective 2:

The second objective sought to establish the prevalent school climate in the selected secondary schools.

Table 2: School Climate of the selected secondary schools

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Type of climate | Mode |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------------|------|
| The learning environment is conducive | 64(50.8%) | 46(36.5%) | 4(3.2%) | 11(8.7%) | 1(0.8%) | Positive | 1 |
| The school is safe for staff and learners | 62(49.2%) | 49(39.0%) | 6(4.8%) | 5(3.0%) | 4(4.0%) | Positive | 1 |
| Stealing of school property is a problem | 14(11.1%) | 20(15.9%) | 18(14.3%) | 47(37.3%) | 27(21.4%) | Positive | 4 |
| The resources in this school are adequate | 16(12.7%) | 30(23.8%) | 20(15.9%) | 41(32.5%) | 19(15.1%) | Negative | 4 |
| Fighting and bullying amongst learners often takes place in this school | 4(3.2%) | 14(11.1%) | 13(10.3%) | 45(35.7%) | 50(39.7%) | Positive | 5 |
| Classes in this school start on time | 16(12.7%) | 44(34.9%) | 25(19.8) | 26(20.6%) | 15(12.0%) | Positive | 2 |
| Learners often tease one another | 13(10.3%) | 27(21.4%) | 28(22.2) | 38(30.23%) | 20(15.9%) | Positive | 4 |
| Teachers need more time to deal with disruptive learners | 29(23.0%) | 49(38.9%) | 17(13.5%) | 23(18.3%) | 8(6.3%) | Negative | 2 |
| There is transparency between head teachers and teachers | 28(22.2%) | 39(31.0%) | 35(27.8%) | 16(12.7%) | 8(6.3%) | Positive | 2 |
| There is a comfortable place where teachers can gather. | 24(19%) | 53(42.1%) | 14(11.1%) | 19(15.1%) | 16(12.7%) | Positive | 2 |

1= Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

Source: Authro- FieldSurvey(October,2019).

The findings revealed that eight (8) out of ten (10) variables showed that the most prevalent school climate in the schools under investigation was Positive, two (2) out of the ten (10) variables showed that the school climate was Negative. From these statistics it is clear therefore that, the most dominant school climate in the selected secondary schools is positive.

Research Objective 3

The third objective sought to establish the relationship between leadership style of the head teachers and school climate. In performing the analysis, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The variables leadership style and school climate were computed by

adding the responses of all the participants in the analysis. The results showed that there was a strong linear negative correlation ($r = - 0.73$) between the leadership style exhibited by head teachers and School Climate in the selected secondary schools in Ndola district. ($r = -.073, n = 126, p = 0.414$). Because the value of $p > 0.05$, sufficient evidence was found to justify the rejection of the alternative (research) hypothesis and thus accept the null hypothesis of no relationship and concluded that the relationship between leadership style and school climate was not statistically significant. The result implies that there is an inverse relationship between leadership style of head teacher and school climate such that when leadership exhibited by the head teacher increases in the degree of autocracy for instance, it fosters a negative school climate.

Table 3: depicts results of the Pearson product moment correlation test of the relationship between leadership style and school climate.

Table 3: The relationship between leadership style and school climate
Correlations

| | | Leadership Style | School Climate |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Leadership Style | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.073 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .414 |
| | N | 126 | 126 |
| School Climate | Pearson Correlation | -.073 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .414 | |
| | N | 126 | 126 |

Source: Author- Field Survey (October, 2019).

6. Discussion

6.1 Objective One- Perceptions of head teachers and teachers on the head teachers leadership styles.

It was established through the findings of the study that 18% of the participants perceived the head teachers' leadership style as autocratic, while 14% said it was laissez- faire and 68% perceived the head teachers' style as democratic. This is in line with (Mbiti, 2007; Ardichvili & Kuchenke, 2010, Egwunyenga, 2010) who state that the leadership styles associated with educational administration could be identified as autocratic, democratic, laissez faire and participatory leadership styles. Yukl (1989) who observed that three different leadership styles are prevalent in any set up including democratic, autocratic and laissez faire.

6.2 Objective 2- The prevalent school climate

The research findings revealed that eight out of the ten variables showed that the most prevalent school climate in the selected schools was positive, while two out of the ten variables showed that the school climate was negative. An analysis of eight out of ten variables which include the following; conducive learning environment, safety for staff and learners, security of school property, levels of fighting and bullying amongst learners, time management in classes, transparency between head teachers and teachers, school as comfort zone for teachers showed that the schools had a positive school climate while an assessment of two other variables including; teachers 's need of time to deal with disruptive learners and adequacy of resources in school showed a Negative school climate. From these statistics it is clear therefore that, the most dominant school climate in the selected secondary schools is positive. These findings are consistent with (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, Njuguna, 1998 and Schermerhorn et al, 2000) who state that there is a link between democratic leadership style and a positive school climate and school members morale. A positive school climate exists when students, staff, parents and the community feel safe and comfortable. Further a positive school climate means a secure environment and belief system for the day to day operations and has an impact on students success including student academic achievements, high morale, staff productivity and effective management.

6.3 Objective 3- The relationship between leadership style and school climate

It emerged from the findings that there was a strong linear negative correlation ($r = -0.73$) between the leadership style exhibited by head teacher and School Climate in the selected secondary schools in Ndola district. ($r = -.073, n = 126, p = 0.414$). Due to the fact that the value of $p > 0.05$, researcher accepted the null hypothesis of no relationship and concluded that the relationship between leadership style and school climate was not statistically significant. The value of $r = -0.73$ implies that there is an inverse relationship between school climate and leadership style of the school manager such that when leadership exhibited by the head teacher is strict and not inclusive, it is likely to foster a positive school climate characterised by involvement and commitment of the work force. Conversely, when leadership style is open, it results in a negative climate in the school with less or little participation between the members of staff. These findings are in line with Amedome (2018) who also found a strong negative linear relationship between leadership style and school climate in Ghana.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that the most dominant leadership style exhibited by the head teachers in the selected secondary schools is the democratic leadership style. The study further concluded from the findings that the democratic leadership style had a positive effect on the school climate in the selected secondary schools. The Pearson product-moment correlation test showed that there was a strong linear negative correlation between the leadership style exhibited by Head teachers and school climate. The relationship between leadership style and school climate was not statistically significant.

8. Recommendations

The study recommends more capacity building trainings for head teachers in educational management and leadership. Further research could be done with a bigger sample and also using a qualitative approach.

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Author Profile

Charity Ngomais is a secondary school teacher at Northrise combined School in Ndola. She is a head of Department for Business Studies. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Commerce from Mulungushi University and She will be graduating with Master of Arts Degree in Educational Administration and Leadership from Mulungushi University in November, 2020. Her research interests are Business Studies, Education Management and Leadership.

Leonard Sakakombe is a lecturer in the school of education at Mulungushi University. He holds a Masters degree in Education from Ediburgh University in Scotland and a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Zambia. His research interests are education management, special needs education and entrepreneurial education.

Rachel Kabeta is a lecturer in the school of education at Mulungushi University. She holds a PhD in Education Administration from the University of Zambia; an MA in Education Administration from Michigan State University and a BA in Education from the University of Zambia. Her research interests are educational leadership, administration and curriculum studies.