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Original Research*

THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ARUSHA DISTRICT COUNCIL, TANZANIA

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Abstract

This study examined the role of transformational leadership style on enhancing students' academic performance in public secondary schools within Arusha District Council, Tanzania. The study employed a mixed research approach and a convergent parallel research design. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from 80 teachers and 10 heads of schools as key informants, respectively, and were analyzed separately using descriptive and thematic approaches under Path-Goal theory. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to recruit participants into the study, with the sample size determined using Yamane's formula. The findings revealed that transformational practices impacted students' academic performance in the studied area. In particular, the results highlighted the importance of enhancing teachers' and students' motivation, open communication, involvement, improving feedback quality, and creating a supportive learning environment, which were found to impact students' learning outcomes. Based on these results, the study recommends that education administrators and planners develop and support leadership training initiatives that focus on building transformational traits among secondary school leaders. Finally, school management should introduce mentorship and ongoing professional development programmes that nurture and strengthen transformational leadership qualities geared to enhance students' learning outcomes.

Keywords: Leadership styles; Transformational leadership**;** Academic performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Research worldwide emphasizes the critical role of leadership styles in influencing educational outcomes. In the United States, studies reveal that transformational leadership substantially boosts student achievement by creating a positive school environment and setting high expectations for students and staff (Robinson et al., 2021). Similarly, European and African research highlights the importance of leadership styles in improving academic performance in schools. In countries such as Kenya and South Africa, research shows that effective school leadership, particularly transformational, plays a vital role in overcoming educational challenges like limited resources and large class sizes (Lumadi, 2022). Transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and

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motivating both teachers and students, has been recognized as especially effective in addressing these issues and improving academic performance across various African settings (Mwebi, 2023).

In the East African region, countries are working towards improving educational quality, often in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all. For example, Kenya has introduced policies that enhance leadership training in schools, reflecting a regional commitment to educational reform (Nabukenya, 2021). The impact of school leadership on student academic performance is evident in developing countries like Tanzania. Recently, Tanzania has introduced extensive educational reforms aimed at enhancing academic results. However, the success of these reforms is closely tied to the leadership styles implemented by school managements. Public secondary schools in Tanzania encounter numerous challenges that impede academic success, such as insufficient resources, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic disparities (Morrison & Young, 2021). These obstacles underscore the need for effective school leadership to improve educational outcomes.

Leadership approaches that focus on teacher motivation, professional development, and strategic resource management may be more successful in overcoming these barriers and enhancing student performance (Bush & Glover, 2020). Transformational leadership, which is marked by inspiring and motivating teachers and students toward common goals, has been shown to have positive effects on educational outcomes globally (Kumar & Singh, 2022). In Tanzania, with its ongoing educational reforms, leaders who employ transformational styles might be better positioned to create an environment that supports academic success. Transformational leaders excel in communicating a compelling vision, offering emotional support, and engaging in collaborative decision-making, which can lead to improved teacher effectiveness and student performance (Moseley et al., 2023).

Like other developing countries, the Tanzanian government has taken steps to improve educational leadership through initiatives such as the Education and Training Policy of 2014, revised in 2023, which emphasizes the role of effective leadership in enhancing learning outcomes. The National Strategy for School Leadership Development 2021/2025/6 outlines specific goals for leadership training programmes aimed at equipping school leaders with essential skills (MoEST, 2021). However, there is still a notable gap in the systematic implementation of these programs across all regions, particularly in rural areas like Arusha District Council, where access to training opportunities remains limited (UNESCO, 2023). This study, therefore, aimed at exploring the extent to which transformational leadership practices impact students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Arusha District Council.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by **the** Path-Goal Theory of Leadership, introduced by Robert House in 1971, which emphasizes that leaders enhance follower motivation and goal attainment by clarifying paths to objectives and eliminating obstacles. The theory purports that effective leadership requires adapting one's style to the needs of followers and the specifics of the situation (Fabac et al. 2022). It categorizes leadership into four styles- directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Directive leadership involves offering explicit instructions and

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expectations to help followers understand and complete their tasks. Supportive leadership focuses on showing concern for followers' well-being and creating a supportive environment. Participative leadership includes involving followers in decision-making, thus increasing their engagement and ownership. Achievement-oriented leadership emphasizes setting challenging goals and fostering high performance through a commitment to excellence (Northouse, 2022).

The main significant strength of Path-Goal Theory lies in its practical applicability across various leadership contexts, including education. Its flexibility allows school leaders to adjust their leadership style to address the specific needs within a public secondary school setting. For example, a leader using a directive approach may provide structured guidance during curriculum changes, ensuring that teachers effectively implement new strategies. Alternatively, a supportive style can enhance the school climate by addressing teachers' concerns and fostering a sense of community and trust (Pacia & Guevarra 2023). This adaptability enables leaders to tackle diverse challenges, from boosting student engagement to improving teacher morale, thereby contributing to better academic outcomes. Recently, studies have shown that effective school leadership involves not only setting clear goals and providing the necessary support but also adapting leadership styles to meet specific challenges (Leithwood et al., 2022). Applying Path-Goal Theory in this study allowed researchers to investigate how transformational leadership practices impact students' academic performance. Thus, offering insights into how school leadership practices can improve both teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement in public secondary schools in Arusha DC.

2.2 Empirical review

The relationship between leadership styles and students' learning outcomes has been a topic of significant interest to researchers worldwide. Mwove et al. (2023) investigated the impact of principals' leadership styles on students' academic performance in public secondary schools within Mwala Sub-county, Machakos County. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study targeted a population comprising 72 schools, 72 principals, and 471 teachers. From this population, 36 schools were selected using a stratified random sampling technique, and all 36 principals from these schools were purposively included in the study. The findings indicated a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and students' academic performance ($R = .374$, $p = .038$). Similarly, a weak positive and statistically significant correlation was observed between transactional leadership and academic performance ($R = .428$, $p = .016$). Additionally, the study found a weak positive yet statistically significant correlation between democratic leadership and students' academic performance ($R = .365$, $p = .043$). Conversely, a weak negative correlation between autocratic leadership and students' academic performance was identified, but this correlation was not statistically significant ($R = -.259$, $p = .160$).

Maharaj and Naidoo (2021) investigated the impact of transformational leadership on academic performance in secondary schools in South Africa. Utilizing a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional survey design, they analyzed data from a sample of 250 participants, comprising 200 students and 50 teachers. Their findings indicated a positive correlation between transformational leadership and student academic performance, demonstrating that schools with leaders who exhibited inspirational motivation and individualized consideration achieved higher student outcomes. García and Pérez (2022) investigated transformational leadership and its effect

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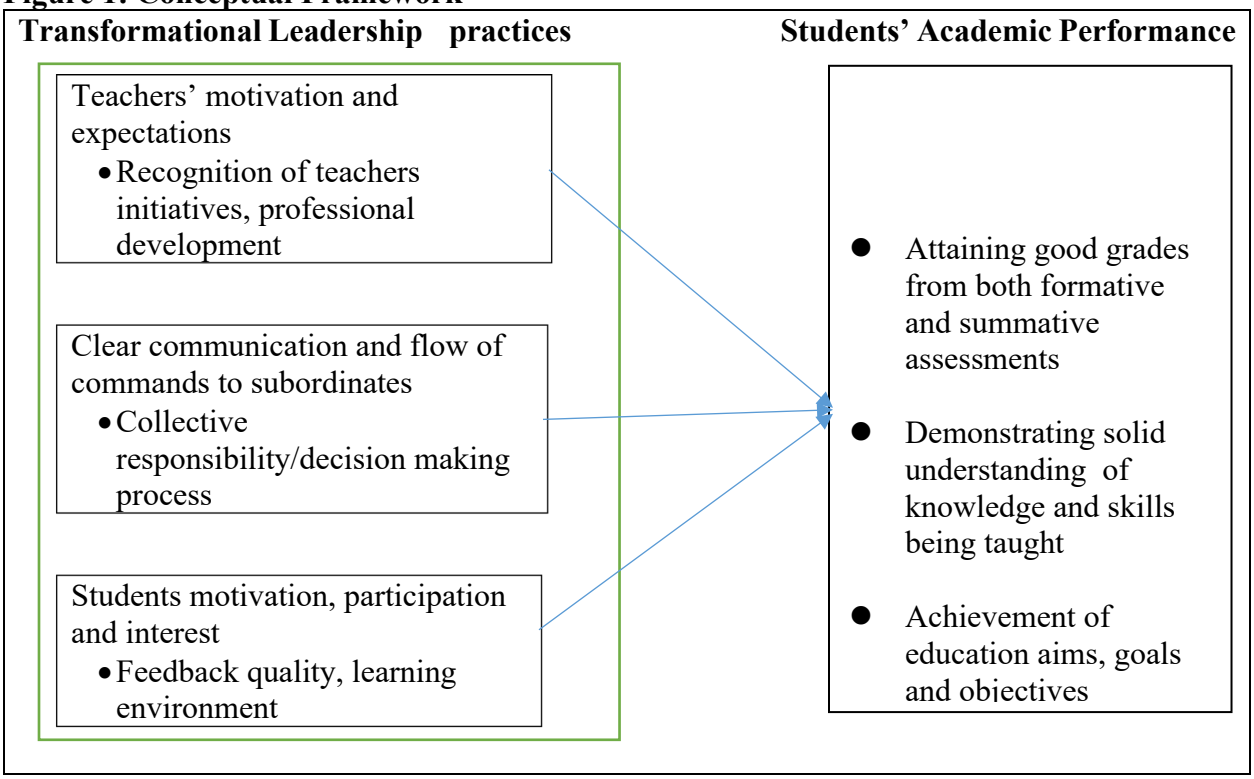
on student learning Outcomes in middle schools in Spain. Utilizing a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, they analyzed data from 180 participants, including 150 students and 30 teachers across multiple middle schools. Their results indicated that transformational leadership had a beneficial impact on student learning outcomes, with visionary leadership and teacher support leading to improvements in student grades and greater engagement. Singh and Kaur (2023) examined transformational leadership in enhancing students' achievement in high schools in India. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a descriptive correlational design, the study involved a sample of 300 students and 60 teachers from 15 high schools. The results indicated that transformational leadership significantly improves academic performance by increasing teacher motivation and student engagement, which in turn leads to higher test scores and overall academic progress in schools led by transformational leaders. Chen and Zhou (2020) conducted a study to examine the effects of transformational leadership style on students' academic success in secondary schools in China. Adopting a quantitative research approach with a longitudinal survey design, the study analyzed data from 250 students and 40 teachers across 12 secondary schools. The findings indicated a positive correlation between transformational leadership and student academic success, demonstrating that leaders who fostered a supportive environment and maintained high expectations significantly enhanced student performance over time. Given the context of transformational dimensions measured in the aforementioned study, there is a need to conduct a similar study in a different context, such as Tanzania, a gap that the current study intends to bridge.

Kumar and Sharma (2024) explored the relationship between transformational leadership and academic achievement in secondary schools in Malaysia. Using a quantitative approach and a survey design, they collected data from 180 students and 45 teachers across 9 secondary schools. The findings revealed a strong positive link between transformational leadership and academic performance, highlighting that leaders who focused on continuous professional development and fostered a supportive school climate significantly improved student outcomes. While previous studies suggest a positive link between transformational leadership and academic outcomes (Mwove et al., 2023; Maharaj & Naidoo, 2021), the strength of these relationships remains weak, necessitating the need for further research into a local context, such as that of public secondary schools in Arusha DC. Moreover, much of the existing research focused on a quantitative approach, leaving the qualitative aspects, such as the perceptions of students and teachers about transformational leadership practices. This study, therefore, employed a mixed research approach essentially to explore the role of transformational leadership on students' learning outcomes, particularly in public secondary schools. The study findings will inform policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders on the importance of transformational leadership practices in enhancing students' learning outcomes.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study links transformational leadership to student academic performance. It posits that practices associated with transformational leadership impacted student academic performance through enhanced teachers and students' motivation, involvement in decision making, open communication and supportive learning environment. The framework also integrates aspects of transactional leadership to provide a well-rounded understanding of leadership effects on students' academic outcomes.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's own construct (2025)

The conceptual framework illustrates how specific leadership and instructional factors collectively contribute to improved student academic performance. It is organised into three key domains on the left side teachers' motivation and expectations, communication processes within the school, and students' motivation and participation. Teachers' motivation is shaped through recognition of their initiatives and opportunities for professional development, which in turn encourages stronger instructional effort. Effective communication and a smooth flow of directives foster collective responsibility and enable shared decision-making, creating a coherent teaching environment. Students' motivation is influenced by the quality of feedback they receive and the overall learning environment, supporting their engagement in classroom activities. These three domains work together to support student outcomes shown on the right side of the framework, including achieving strong performance in both formative and summative assessments, demonstrating a firm grasp of knowledge and skills taught, and meeting broader educational goals and objectives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, allowing the researcher to integrate quantitative and qualitative evidence to gain a broader and more reliable understanding of the subject under investigation.

3.2 Research Design

A convergent parallel design was used, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed independently, and then brought together to generate a comprehensive interpretation of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

3.3 Study Area

The study was carried out in Arusha District Council, Tanzania, and an area that comprises both rural and semi-urban settings. The district is characterized by diverse school leadership practices and variations in student achievement, making it a relevant yet understudied context for examining the issues addressed in this research.

3.4 Population and sample size

The target population was 448 participants comprising of 37 school heads and 411 teachers, from ten selected public secondary school in Arusha district council as per Arusha DC Education Department 2024 statistics. A suitable sample of 90 participants comprising 10 school heads and 80 teachers was selected using purposive and simple random sampling methods**,** with the sample size determined using Yamane's formula 1967**.** The sample size was calculated using Yaman's (1967) formula, which is expressed as follows:

$$n= \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where n is the required sample, N is the entire population, and e is the margin error at 90% Confidence level. N = 411, e = 0.1

$$n= \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

$$n= \frac{411}{1+411(0.1)^2}$$

n = 80

3.5 Sampling procedure

The study used a probability sampling procedure from a calculated sample size to collect quantitative data from 80 teachers, aiming to ensure both representativeness and strong statistical reliability. In addition, a separate group of 10 heads of school were purposively selected as key informants to provide qualitative data. As a result, the total sample size for the study was 90 respondents, 80 teachers and 10 heads of school.

3.6 Data collection methods

This study employed questionnaire surveys to gather quantitative data from teachers because this method allowed the researcher to reach a large number of respondents efficiently and to obtain standardised information that could be compared across schools. Questionnaires were appropriate for capturing teachers' perceptions on the key variables under study, as they provide structured responses that support statistical analysis. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 heads of schools to collect qualitative data. This approach was chosen because it offers the flexibility to explore participants' views in depth, enables the researcher to probe for clarification, and captures contextual insights that cannot be obtained through questionnaires. Using both methods strengthened the study by providing complementary forms of evidence and enhancing the credibility of the findings.

3.7 Data analysis

This study used both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, correlation, and regression and were computed using SPSS version 2.6. While qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, which involved transcribing the interviews, coding the responses for recurring themes, and synthesizing insights to provide a rich understanding of transformational leadership dynamics.

Combining both data types provided a clearer picture of how transformational leadership practices impacted students' academic outcomes**.**

4. RESULTS

Transformational leadership and students' academic performance

Data were initially analyzed descriptively across three dimensions of transformational leadership style, namely, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, along with ideal influence. Transformational leaders were found to impact students' academic performance by influencing teachers' motivation and expectations, recognizing and supporting teachers' initiatives, ensuring clear communication and command flow, fostering collective decision-making between leaders and teachers, enhancing students' motivation, participation, and interest, improving feedback quality, and creating a conducive learning environment, as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Teachers' Assessment of their heads of school transformational Leadership Practices

Teachers' motivation and expectation	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of inspirational motivation has maximized the teachers' motivation and expectations	3.51	Agree
The school leadership of intellectual stimulation has maximized the teachers' motivation and expectations	4.92	Strongly agree
The school leadership of individual consideration has maximized the teachers' motivation and expectations	4.26	Strongly agree
The school leadership of ideal influence has maximized the teachers' motivation and expectations	4.65	Strongly Agree
Recognizing subordinates or teachers' initiatives and complement or motivate their deeds	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of inspirational motivation have maximized the recognition of subordinates or teachers' initiatives and complement or motivates their deeds	4.05	Strongly agree
The school leadership of intellectual stimulation has maximized the recognition of subordinates or teachers' initiatives and complement or motivates their deeds	4.19	Strongly agree
The school leadership of individual consideration has maximized the recognition of subordinates or teachers' initiatives and complements or motivates their deeds	4.35	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of ideal influence has maximized the recognition of subordinates or teachers' initiatives and complements or motivates their deeds	4.21	Strongly Agree
Clear communication and flow of commands to subordinates	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of communication and flow of commands to subordinates has maximized the clear communication and flow of commands to subordinates	4.30	Strongly Agree

The school leadership of intellectual stimulation has maximized the clear communication and flow of commands to subordinates	4.19	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of individual consideration has maximized the clear communication and flow of commands to subordinates	4.35	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of ideal influence has maximized the clear communication and flow of commands to subordinates	3.66	Agree
Collective or acceptable decision-making between leaders and teachers	Mean	Interpretation
The school leadership of inspirational motivation has maximized the collective or acceptable decision-making between leaders and teachers	3.51	Agree
The school leadership of intellectual stimulation has maximized the collective or acceptable decision making between leaders and teachers	4.92	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of individual consideration has maximized the collective or acceptable decision making between leaders and teachers	4.26	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of ideal influence has maximized the collective or acceptable decision making between leaders and teachers	4.67	Strongly Agree
Students' motivations, participation, and interest	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of inspirational motivation has maximized the students' motivations, participation, and interest	4.05	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of individual consideration has maximized the students' motivations, participation, and interest	4.24	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of ideal influence has maximized the students' motivations, participation and interest	3.95	Agree
Feedback quality	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of inspirational motivation has maximized the feedback quality	3.80	Agree
The school leadership of intellectual stimulation have maximized the feedback quality	4.19	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of individual considerations have maximized the feedback quality	3.35	Neutral
The school leadership of ideal influence have maximized the feedback quality	3.04	Neutral
Learning environment	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
The school leadership of inspirational motivation have maximized the learning environment	4.30	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of intellectual stimulation have maximized the learning environment	4.48	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of individual consideration have maximized the learning environment	3.66	Strongly Agree
The school leadership of ideal influence have maximized the learning environment	3.57	Agree

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Table 1 summarizes the findings on transformational leadership behaviors that contribute to successful students' academic performance. The results indicate that respondents expressed varying levels of agreement with the presented statements, ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. The mean scores were calculated which indicates that respondents strongly agreed that transformational leadership behaviors significantly influence academic practices impacting students' academic performance, with an average mean score of 4.06. Specifically, the data shows that respondents "strongly agree" with nineteen items and "agree" with six items related to the role of transformational leadership behaviors on academic performance in public secondary schools in the Arusha district council, while three items received neutral ratings.

Teachers' recognition, motivation and expectation

Furthermore, the average mean score for teacher motivation and expectations, linked to enhancing academic practices through transformational leadership, was 4.335, suggesting strong agreement that, yes, teachers' motivation and expectation when considered have a strong bearing on students' academic performance. This finding from teachers who filled questionnaires was clearly supported by information gathered through interviews with heads of school as one interviewee noted:

> ….I believe that motivating teachers directly impacts students' success. For instance, we have introduced a recognition program where we celebrate both students and teachers upon achievement. When teachers are recognized for their efforts, it boots their working morale which in turn, motivate students to perform better (H - S7, April 30, 2025).

Similarly, in an interview with heads of school on whether recognition and supporting teachers' initiatives have a role to play in enhancing students' achievement. They all agreed that when teachers feel valued, appreciated and supported them are more likely to go beyond basic expectations, implementing innovative teaching strategies that foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes. In particular, one participant emphasized the importance of recognizing teachers' contributions to the school's academic improvement;

> *When teachers feel valued, appreciated, and supported by school leadership, they are more likely to be inspired to implement innovative teaching methods, build stronger relationships with students, and maintain high levels of enthusiasm and commitment to their work. This, in turn, contribute to a high-quality learning environment, which results in better students' academic outcomes* (H - S3, April 17, 2025).

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings show that recognition and support for teachers' initiatives play an important role in shaping teachers' motivation and instructional practices, which in turn contribute to improved student achievement. Quantitative results indicate that teachers who report feeling appreciated and supported tend to demonstrate higher levels of commitment to their instructional duties. The qualitative evidence reinforces this pattern, with heads of schools confirming that acknowledgment of teachers' efforts encourages them to adopt innovative teaching approaches, strengthen classroom engagement, and maintain a positive professional attitude. Overall, the two data sources consistently reflect that supportive leadership practices create a conducive teaching environment that enhances students' academic outcomes.

Clear communication and participation in decision-making

Additionally, the average mean score for recognizing teachers' initiatives and providing motivation was 4.2, indicating strong agreement on the importance of this practice among leaders in public

secondary schools. The score for clear communication and command flow was 4.13, reflecting in agreement that these transformational behavioral practices are essential for effective schools academic achievement. Similarly, establishing collaborative decision-making processes between leaders and teachers had an average mean score of 4.34, highlighting its significance in the Arusha district council. Such a finding was supported during an interview with the head of school, who revealed that:

> Regular communication and collegial interactions between school leadership, teachers and students is essential for students' achievements. We encourage open communication and active involvement, and when teachers and students feel involved and supported, they are more engaged in their teaching and learning activities, thus positively impact their academic performance (H-S1, April 18, 2025).

Students' motivation, participation, and supportive learning environment

The findings further indicate that developing students' motivation, participation, and interest had a mean score of 3.86, and promoting quality feedback was rated 3.59 while promoting a conducive learning environment was rated 4.00 all of which indicates teachers agreed that students' motivation, participation and interest, quality feedback, and promotion supportive learning environment play a great role in enhancing students' academic performance in public secondary schools in the study area. Similarly, interviews conducted with heads of school conform to the descriptive statistics, where the majority agreed that a personalized-goal oriented approach, an inclusive and conducive learning environment are essential for improving academic performance. Participants considered that supportive approaches to students' academic needs and their social and emotional well-being promote holistic development as one narrated:

> In our school, students are encouraged and supported to participate in academics and extracurricular activities, share their worries, career paths, and personal development with the school counselor. Such holistic approach has helped students cope up and balance their academic goals with their well-being ultimately, leading to improved learning outcomes (H - S5, April 15, 2025).

Alongside that, participants pointed out that transformational leadership fosters an environment where students feel supported and encouraged to strive for excellence as one participants recalled:

> Since I started working in this school, we created a culture of achievement, where students encouraged one another to strive for excellence. As a direct result, there was a 10% improvement in our last year Form Four National examination results that enabled us for the first time, eliminate division zero in our school (H - S1, April 23, 2025).

5. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that transformative leadership plays a central role in shaping students' academic performance through several interconnected pathways. First, practices that strengthen teachers' motivation, such as recognizing their initiatives, valuing their contributions, and supporting their professional growth, were found to reinforce teachers' willingness to invest greater effort in instructional tasks. When teachers perceive their work as appreciated, they tend to set higher expectations for themselves and adopt more effective teaching strategies, which ultimately enhances students' learning outcomes. Secondly, the findings showed that clear communication channels and an orderly flow of instructions between school leaders and teachers

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contribute to improved coordination of academic activities. Transformative leaders who encourage shared decision-making create a sense of collective responsibility, enabling teachers to participate in shaping school priorities and engaging more meaningfully in school improvement efforts. This collaborative environment strengthens instructional consistency and supports student learning.

Furthermore, transformative leadership practices that directly influence students such as nurturing their motivation, stimulating their participation, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere were shown to shape students' engagement and persistence. The provision of constructive feedback, coupled with a safe and well-resourced learning environment, allows students to clearly understand expectations and monitor their progress, contributing to improved academic performance. These results resonate with findings by García and Pérez (2022), who reported that visionary and supportive leadership contributes to higher student grades and enhanced engagement. The present study also aligns with Robinson et al. (2021) and Kumar and Singh (2022), who established that transformational leadership, grounded in inspiration and collective goal setting, fosters a positive school climate that strengthens both teacher performance and student achievement. Similarly, Naharaj and Naidoo (2021) found that transformational leaders who demonstrate individualized consideration and motivate teachers and learners tend to oversee schools that record higher levels of academic success. Collectively, the evidence underscores the vital role of transformative leadership in shaping teaching conditions, learner engagement, and overall academic performance.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership, have a statistically significant and positive influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools within Arusha District Council. Empirical evidence from hypothesis testing established a significant relationship between transformational leadership practices and students' academic performance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The strong positive Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.784$, $p = 0.001$) indicates that higher levels of transformational leadership are closely associated with improved student performance. The findings further demonstrate that transformational leadership enhances academic achievement mainly through strengthening students' learning motivation, increasing engagement in the learning process, and improving overall satisfaction with schooling. Leadership practices such as setting clear academic goals, maintaining high expectations, motivating learners, and creating a supportive and engaging school environment were found to be integral to these outcomes. Regression analysis reinforced these results by confirming that transformational leadership significantly and independently predicts students' academic performance when other variables are controlled. Moreover, the high mean score ($M = 4.335$) for teacher motivation and expectations reflects strong agreement among respondents that transformational leadership practices effectively support student learning. Taken together, the findings affirm that transformational leadership plays a central and practical role in creating school conditions that foster sustained academic achievement and improved educational effectiveness in public secondary schools.

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5.2 Recommendation

The study findings revealed that transformational leadership practices impacted students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Arusha district council. In particular, the study found out that school leaders who practice transformational leadership behavior such as creating shared vision, promoting high academic standard, motivating both teachers and students involvement in decision making, promoting supportive learning environment help to drive better students learning outcomes in their schools. Basing on the study findings, it is recommended that policymakers, education administrators' and planners at district level should develop and support leadership training initiatives that focus on building transformational leadership traits among secondary school leaders in Arusha DC. In addition, at school level, management should introduce mentorship and ongoing professional development to nurture and strengthen transformational leadership qualities and, in turn, boost students' academic performance in public secondary schools in the study area.

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