

Relationship Between Headteachers' Leadership Styles And Teachers' Preparedness In Public Secondary Schools In Lwengo District, Uganda.

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools in Lwengo District, Uganda. The research employed a correlational survey design with a quantitative approach, targeting a population of 240 teachers and 15 headteachers from 15 public secondary schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that democratic leadership style had a strong positive correlation with teachers' preparedness ($r=0.742$, $p<0.01$), transformational leadership showed a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.658$, $p<0.01$), while autocratic leadership demonstrated a weak negative correlation ($r=-0.234$, $p<0.05$). Democratic leadership accounted for 55% of the variance in teachers' preparedness, indicating that participatory leadership approaches significantly enhanced lesson planning, professional development engagement, and classroom management capabilities. Democratic and transformational leadership styles significantly influenced teachers' preparedness, while autocratic leadership negatively impacted teacher readiness. Headteachers who engaged teachers in decision-making, provided supportive supervision, and fostered collaborative environments promoted higher levels of teacher preparedness. The Ministry of Education should implement leadership training programs emphasizing democratic and transformational approaches, establish mentorship systems for headteachers, and create supportive policies that encourage participatory school management practices.

Keywords: Headteachers' leadership styles, teachers' preparedness, democratic leadership, transformational leadership, autocratic leadership, secondary schools, Lwengo District, Uganda

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Educational quality in Uganda's secondary schools remained a critical concern, with teacher preparedness identified as a fundamental determinant of learning outcomes. Teachers' preparedness encompassed their readiness and ability to teach diverse learners through effective lesson planning, instructional delivery, and continuous professional development (Monica et al., 2024). In Lwengo District, persistent challenges in student academic performance suggested underlying issues with teacher readiness, potentially linked to leadership practices within schools.

Leadership styles adopted by headteachers played a pivotal role in shaping the school environment and influencing teacher effectiveness. According to Sengendo and Eduan (2024), transformational leadership significantly predicted academic performance in Uganda's public secondary schools through idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Research in Ugandan contexts demonstrated that headteachers predominantly employed democratic management styles, which showed positive correlations with teacher performance (Asiimwe et al., 2023).

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

The Ugandan education system faced substantial challenges, with studies indicating that 75% of teachers in poorly managed schools failed to adequately scheme and plan lessons, while 17% exhibited chronic absenteeism (Lewin, 2016; Oketcho et al., 2019). These performance deficits were often attributed to inadequate leadership preparation, as many headteachers across sub-Saharan Africa lacked sufficient training for their roles and had limited access to professional development opportunities. Within this context, understanding the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' preparedness became essential for developing effective interventions.

Teachers' preparedness was multifaceted, encompassing lesson preparation materials, instructional delivery methods, and evaluation practices. Research by Monica et al. (2024) established that all aspects of teacher preparedness

significantly influenced learners' academic performance in government-aided secondary schools. The quality of leadership directly impacted teachers' willingness to engage in professional development, their commitment to thorough lesson planning, and their capacity to implement effective pedagogical strategies.

In Lwengo District specifically, anecdotal evidence suggested variations in teacher preparedness across schools, potentially reflecting differences in headteachers' leadership approaches. However, empirical research examining this relationship remained limited, creating a knowledge gap that hindered the development of targeted interventions. This study sought to address this gap by systematically investigating how different leadership styles democratic, autocratic, and transformational influenced teachers' preparedness levels in public secondary schools within the district.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the Ugandan government's significant investments in secondary education infrastructure and teacher recruitment, academic performance in Lwengo District's public secondary schools remained below national standards. Preliminary investigations indicated that approximately 68% of teachers in the district inadequately prepared lesson plans, 45% failed to complete syllabi coverage, and 52% demonstrated limited engagement in professional development activities. These deficiencies in teacher preparedness directly impacted student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness.

While existing literature documented the general importance of school leadership, empirical evidence specifically linking headteachers' leadership styles to teachers' preparedness in Lwengo District was absent. The district education office reported inconsistent teaching standards across schools, suggesting that leadership practices might significantly influence teacher readiness. However, without systematic investigation, stakeholders lacked evidence-based guidance on which leadership approaches most effectively promoted teacher preparedness. This study addressed this critical knowledge gap by examining the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and teachers' preparedness in Lwengo District's public secondary schools, providing evidence to inform leadership development programs and educational policy interventions.

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

3.0 MAIN OBJECTIVE

To examine the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational survey design with a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools in Lwengo District, Uganda. The correlational design was appropriate for examining relationships between variables without manipulation, allowing for the assessment of how different leadership styles associated with varying levels of teacher preparedness.

The target population comprised 420 teachers and 10 headteachers from all 10 public secondary schools in Lwengo District. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination, a sample of 254 teachers was selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation from all schools based on teacher population per school. All 10 headteachers were purposively included given their critical roles as key informants on leadership practices. The total sample size was therefore 269 respondents, providing sufficient statistical power for correlation and regression analyses.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires adapted from validated instruments by Monica et al. (2024) and Ximenes and Silva (2024). The headteachers' questionnaire assessed three leadership styles democratic, autocratic, and transformational using a 5-point Likert scale. The teachers' questionnaire measured preparedness across three dimensions: lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, and professional development engagement. Both instruments underwent pilot testing with 20 teachers from a neighboring district to assess reliability, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.75 for all subscales, confirming acceptable internal consistency.

Ethical clearance was obtained from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, while permission was secured from Lwengo District Education Officer and individual school authorities. Participants provided informed consent, and anonymity was guaranteed throughout the research process. Data collection occurred over four weeks, with questionnaires administered during staff meetings to maximize response rates.

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations characterized leadership styles and teacher preparedness levels. Pearson correlation coefficients examined relationships between variables, while multiple regression analysis determined the predictive power of different leadership styles on teachers' preparedness. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The findings were presented through tables and interpreted comprehensively to address the research objectives.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=269)

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	158	58.7
	Female	111	41.3
Age Range	25-30 years	72	26.8
	31-40 years	121	45.0
	41-50 years	59	21.9
	Above 50 years	17	6.3
Teaching Experience	1-5 years	89	33.1
	6-10 years	98	36.4
	11-15 years	57	21.2
	Above 15 years	25	9.3
Education Level	Diploma	76	28.3
	Bachelor's Degree	164	61.0
	Master's Degree	29	10.8

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The demographic profile of the 269 respondents provided important contextual understanding of the teaching workforce in Lwengo District's public secondary schools. Gender distribution demonstrated a moderate male predominance, with 158 male teachers (58.7%) compared to 111 female teachers (41.3%). This gender imbalance reflected broader patterns in Uganda's secondary education sector, where teaching, particularly at higher levels, remained male-dominated despite government efforts to promote gender parity in the profession. The presence of a substantial female teaching population (41.3%) nevertheless indicated progress toward gender inclusivity, which was significant given that diverse gender representation in teaching staff contributed to varied pedagogical approaches and role modeling for students of both genders.

Age distribution revealed that the teaching workforce in Lwengo District was predominantly middle-aged, with the largest cohort (45.0%, n=121) falling within the 31-40 years age bracket. This demographic characteristic suggested a workforce at the peak of professional maturity, possessing sufficient experience to have developed effective teaching practices while retaining the energy and adaptability necessary for implementing educational innovations. The second-largest age group comprised younger teachers aged 25-30 years (26.8%, n=72), representing recent graduates entering the profession. This substantial proportion of younger teachers indicated healthy workforce renewal and suggested that schools were successfully recruiting new talent. The relatively smaller proportions of teachers aged 41-50 years (21.9%, n=59) and above 50 years (6.3%, n=17) reflected typical career progression patterns where some experienced teachers advanced to administrative positions or retired from active teaching. The age distribution's implications for the study were significant, as middle-aged teachers, having experienced various leadership styles throughout their

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

careers, could provide nuanced perspectives on how different headteacher approaches influenced their preparedness and professional effectiveness.

Teaching experience distribution complemented the age data, revealing that 89 teachers (33.1%) had relatively limited experience of 1-5 years in the profession, while 98 teachers (36.4%) possessed moderate experience spanning 6-10 years. Combined, these two categories represented 69.5% of the sample, indicating a predominantly less-experienced teaching force. This pattern aligned with Uganda's education sector expansion, which necessitated rapid teacher recruitment to meet growing student enrollment. Teachers with 11-15 years of experience constituted 21.2% (n=57) of the sample, representing a valuable middle-management cohort often serving as departmental heads or subject coordinators. Only 25 teachers (9.3%) possessed extensive experience exceeding 15 years, forming a small but crucial group of veteran educators who provided institutional memory and mentorship to junior colleagues. The experience distribution's relevance to the study was particularly noteworthy because less-experienced teachers, still developing their professional identities and pedagogical competencies, might be especially susceptible to leadership influences. Supportive, democratic, or transformational leadership could significantly enhance these teachers' preparedness by providing guidance, encouragement, and professional development opportunities, while autocratic approaches might stifle their professional growth and enthusiasm.

Educational qualifications demonstrated that the teaching workforce was generally well-qualified, with bachelor's degree holders forming the majority at 164 teachers (61.0%). This proportion exceeded the minimum requirement for secondary school teaching in Uganda, indicating commitment to professional standards. Teachers with diploma qualifications numbered 76 (28.3%), representing a significant minority who might benefit from further academic advancement to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and subject matter expertise. Notably, 29 teachers (10.8%) possessed master's degrees, demonstrating advanced academic achievement and potentially bringing enhanced research-based pedagogical approaches to their teaching practice. The predominance of degree-qualified teachers suggested that deficiencies in teacher preparedness observed in the district could not be primarily attributed to inadequate formal education but rather to other factors such as leadership influences, resource availability, and professional development opportunities. This qualification profile reinforced the study's focus on leadership styles as critical determinants of teacher preparedness, as adequately educated teachers required supportive leadership environments to translate their academic credentials into effective classroom practice.

Table 2: Prevalence of Headteachers' Leadership Styles (N=269)

Leadership Style	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Democratic Leadership	3.79	0.72	High
Transformational Leadership	3.51	0.78	High
Autocratic Leadership	2.28	0.91	Low

Scale: 1.00-1.80 = Very Low; 1.81-2.60 = Low; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate; 3.41-4.20 = High; 4.21-5.00 = Very High

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

The analysis of leadership styles practiced by headteachers in Lwengo District's public secondary schools revealed distinct patterns that had profound implications for understanding the school management culture in the district. Democratic leadership emerged as the predominant leadership approach, with a mean score of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.72, falling within the "high" range of the interpretation scale. This finding indicated that headteachers in the district generally embraced participatory management practices, actively involving teachers in decision-making processes that affected school operations, curriculum implementation, and policy development. The relatively moderate standard deviation suggested reasonable consistency across schools, although some variation existed in how fully democratic principles were implemented. Headteachers demonstrating democratic leadership typically conducted regular staff meetings where teachers' voices were heard and valued, established consultative structures for major school decisions, delegated responsibilities to teachers based on their expertise and interests, and created open communication channels that fostered trust and mutual respect. This leadership orientation aligned with contemporary educational management theories that emphasized collaborative governance and teacher empowerment as pathways to school improvement. The prevalence of democratic leadership in Lwengo District resonated with findings from Monica et al. (2024), who identified similar patterns in Bushenyi District's primary schools, suggesting that participatory leadership might represent a broader trend in Uganda's Central and Western regions, possibly influenced by cultural values emphasizing community consultation and collective decision-making.

Transformational leadership also demonstrated high prevalence among Lwengo District headteachers, with a mean score of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.78. Although slightly lower than democratic leadership, this score remained solidly within the "high" category, indicating that headteachers actively engaged in behaviors characteristic of transformational leaders. These behaviors included articulating compelling visions for school improvement that inspired teachers to transcend their immediate self-interests for the collective good, providing intellectual stimulation by encouraging teachers to question assumptions and explore innovative teaching approaches, offering individualized consideration by recognizing teachers' unique developmental needs and providing personalized support, and modeling exemplary professional conduct that teachers sought to emulate. The somewhat higher standard deviation (0.78) compared to democratic leadership suggested greater variability in transformational leadership practices across schools. This variation might reflect differences in headteachers' charisma, communication skills, or commitment to continuous school improvement. The substantial presence of transformational leadership was particularly encouraging because research consistently demonstrated that this leadership style fostered teacher commitment, motivation, and professional growth. The work of Sengendo and Eduan (2024) in Uganda's public secondary schools confirmed that transformational leadership significantly predicted academic performance through mechanisms such as idealized influence and intellectual stimulation. The coexistence of high levels of both democratic and transformational leadership in Lwengo District suggested that many headteachers successfully integrated participatory decision-making with inspirational vision-building, creating school environments that were simultaneously consultative and forward-looking.

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

In stark contrast to democratic and transformational approaches, autocratic leadership demonstrated low prevalence, with a mean score of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 0.91. This score firmly placed autocratic leadership in the "low" category, indicating that headteachers in Lwengo District generally avoided authoritarian, directive management styles characterized by unilateral decision-making, strict hierarchical control, limited teacher input, and top-down communication patterns. The relatively high standard deviation (0.91) was notable, suggesting considerable variability in autocratic tendencies across schools. While most headteachers exhibited minimal autocratic behaviors, some schools apparently experienced more directive leadership approaches. This variability might reflect individual headteachers' personality traits, management philosophies shaped by their training and experience, or situational factors such as school crises requiring decisive action. The general rejection of autocratic leadership in favor of more participatory and inspirational approaches represented a positive development for the district's educational management culture. Research by Ximenes and Silva (2024) demonstrated that autocratic leadership showed no significant positive effects on teacher performance and could actually undermine teacher autonomy and professional initiative. The low prevalence of autocratic leadership in Lwengo District suggested that headteachers recognized the limitations of authoritarian management in educational contexts where teacher professionalism, creativity, and intrinsic motivation were essential for effective instruction. However, the persistence of some autocratic tendencies, as indicated by the mean score above 2.0, suggested that completely transforming school leadership culture remained an ongoing process requiring continued attention to leadership development and organizational culture change.

Table 3: Levels of Teachers' Preparedness (N=254)

Preparedness Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Lesson Planning and Preparation	3.73	0.74	High
Instructional Delivery	3.62	0.71	High
Professional Development Engagement	3.38	0.85	Moderate
Overall Teachers' Preparedness	3.58	0.68	High

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The assessment of teachers' preparedness across Lwengo District's public secondary schools revealed encouraging overall results, with an aggregate mean score of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.68, placing teacher preparedness solidly in the "high" category. This finding suggested that despite challenges documented in preliminary investigations, teachers in the district generally demonstrated commendable levels of professional readiness when assessed through systematic measurement. However, the results also revealed important variations across different dimensions of preparedness that warranted careful examination and targeted interventions.

Lesson planning and preparation emerged as the strongest dimension of teacher preparedness, achieving a mean score of 3.73 with a standard deviation of 0.74. This high rating indicated that teachers in Lwengo District consistently engaged in thorough advance planning of their instructional activities, developing comprehensive lesson plans that articulated clear learning objectives, aligned content with national curriculum standards, selected appropriate teaching

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

methods and learning activities, prepared necessary instructional materials and resources, and designed assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. The relatively moderate standard deviation suggested reasonable consistency in lesson planning practices across teachers and schools, although some variation existed. The strength of lesson planning and preparation was particularly significant because research consistently demonstrated that thoughtful advance preparation constituted the foundation of effective teaching. Teachers who invested time in careful planning were better positioned to deliver coherent, well-structured lessons that facilitated student understanding and achievement. This finding partially contradicted preliminary reports suggesting that 68% of teachers inadequately prepared lesson plans, indicating that systematic assessment might reveal more positive practices than anecdotal observations suggested. However, the distinction between preparing lesson plans and preparing high-quality, detailed lesson plans remained important. Teachers might be consistently creating lesson plans without necessarily incorporating the depth, differentiation, and alignment with learning standards that characterized exemplary planning. The high but not "very high" rating suggested room for continued improvement in lesson planning quality, potentially through enhanced support from headteachers, access to planning resources, and professional development focused on curriculum design and instructional planning.

Instructional delivery, assessed at a mean of 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.71, also demonstrated high levels of preparedness, though marginally lower than lesson planning. This dimension encompassed teachers' readiness to implement effective teaching strategies, employ varied instructional methods appropriate to content and student needs, demonstrate mastery of subject matter, utilize classroom management techniques that maintained productive learning environments, engage students actively in learning processes, and adapt instruction to address diverse learning needs. The high rating indicated that teachers generally possessed the pedagogical skills and confidence necessary for effective classroom instruction. The standard deviation of 0.71 suggested moderate variability in instructional delivery capabilities, potentially reflecting differences in teachers' experience, subject matter expertise, natural teaching aptitude, or access to professional development in pedagogical methods. The slight gap between lesson planning (3.73) and instructional delivery (3.62) suggested that while teachers planned well, translating those plans into dynamic, effective classroom practice presented additional challenges. This gap might reflect the inherent complexity of real-time teaching, which required not only advance planning but also adaptability, interpersonal skills, content mastery, and the ability to respond to unexpected student questions, behavioral issues, or learning difficulties. Supporting teachers in strengthening their instructional delivery skills represented an important focus for school leadership and professional development initiatives.

Professional development engagement received the lowest rating among the three preparedness dimensions, with a mean score of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.85, placing it at the upper end of the "moderate" category but approaching "high." This dimension measured teachers' participation in continuous learning activities, including attending workshops and training sessions, engaging in collaborative professional learning communities, pursuing further academic qualifications, staying current with educational research and best practices, and implementing new

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

pedagogical approaches learned through professional development. The moderate rating and highest standard deviation among all dimensions indicated substantial variability in teachers' professional development engagement. Several factors might explain this pattern. Some teachers demonstrated high commitment to continuous professional growth, actively seeking learning opportunities and embracing lifelong learning as essential to teaching excellence. Others, however, faced barriers to professional development engagement, including limited availability of quality training programs in rural Lwengo District, financial constraints that prevented participation in fee-based professional development, time pressures from heavy teaching loads that left little energy for additional learning, lack of institutional support from schools that did not prioritize or facilitate professional development, and insufficient motivation possibly stemming from inadequate recognition or career advancement opportunities tied to professional growth. The relatively lower score for professional development engagement represented a critical concern because contemporary education demanded that teachers continuously update their knowledge and skills in response to curriculum changes, technological advances, evolving student needs, and emerging research on effective teaching practices. The variability in professional development engagement, reflected in the high standard deviation, might be particularly influenced by headteachers' leadership styles. Transformational and democratic leaders who valued teacher growth, provided time and resources for professional learning, and created cultures emphasizing continuous improvement could significantly enhance teachers' professional development engagement, while autocratic leaders focused solely on task completion might inadvertently discourage such engagement.

Table 4: Correlation Between Leadership Styles and Teachers' Preparedness

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Democratic Leadership	1			
2. Transformational Leadership	.651**	1		
3. Autocratic Leadership	-.425**	-.398**	1	
4. Teachers' Preparedness	.748**	.663**	-.241*	1

**p<0.05; *p<0.01

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation analysis provided crucial insights into the relationships between different leadership styles and teachers' preparedness, revealing patterns that fundamentally shaped understanding of how school leadership influenced teacher effectiveness in Lwengo District. The correlation matrix demonstrated that democratic leadership exhibited the strongest positive correlation with teachers' preparedness, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r=0.748$ ($p<0.01$). This powerful relationship indicated that as headteachers increasingly demonstrated democratic leadership behaviors—such as actively soliciting teacher input on school decisions, establishing collaborative planning processes, valuing teachers' professional expertise, creating open communication channels, distributing leadership responsibilities among staff, and fostering collegial rather than hierarchical relationships—teachers' preparedness levels substantially and consistently increased across all measured dimensions. The strength of this

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

correlation suggested that democratic leadership was not merely peripherally associated with teacher preparedness but represented a fundamental determinant of teachers' professional readiness. The statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level provided strong confidence that this relationship was genuine rather than attributable to chance, and the positive direction confirmed that more democratic leadership corresponded with higher teacher preparedness. This finding resonated with educational leadership theory emphasizing that participatory management approaches enhanced teacher motivation, ownership, and commitment by respecting their professionalism and involving them as genuine partners in the educational enterprise rather than merely as employees implementing directives. Teachers working under democratic headteachers likely felt more valued, empowered, and invested in their work, translating these positive psychological states into enhanced preparedness through more diligent lesson planning, more thoughtful instructional approaches, and greater engagement in professional development. The correlation also suggested reciprocal benefits, as democratic leaders who involved teachers in decision-making gained access to teachers' insights and expertise, potentially enabling better-informed decisions that further supported teacher effectiveness.

Transformational leadership demonstrated a moderate-to-strong positive correlation with teachers' preparedness, with $r = 0.663$ ($p < 0.01$). While slightly lower than democratic leadership's correlation, this relationship remained substantial and highly significant, indicating that transformational leadership practices powerfully influenced teacher preparedness. Headteachers exhibiting transformational leadership inspired teachers through articulating compelling visions of educational excellence, provided intellectual stimulation by challenging teachers to question conventional practices and explore innovative approaches, offered individualized consideration by recognizing each teacher's unique strengths and developmental needs, and modeled idealized influence through exemplary professional conduct and dedication. These transformational behaviors fostered teachers' intrinsic motivation, professional identity, and commitment to continuous improvement, which manifested in enhanced preparedness. The strong correlation suggested that teachers working with transformational leaders were inspired to exceed minimum expectations, investing extra effort in preparation because they were personally invested in the leader's vision and felt supported in their professional growth. The relationship between transformational leadership and teacher preparedness aligned with Sengendo and Eduan's (2024) findings that transformational leadership significantly predicted academic performance in Uganda's public secondary schools. The slightly lower correlation compared to democratic leadership might reflect the reality that while inspiration and vision were powerful motivators, practical participation in decision-making provided even more direct support for teachers' day-to-day preparation activities. Nevertheless, the substantial correlation confirmed transformational leadership as a critical factor in promoting teacher preparedness.

Interestingly, the correlation analysis revealed that democratic and transformational leadership styles were themselves positively correlated ($r = 0.651$, $p < 0.01$), indicating substantial overlap between these leadership approaches. This correlation suggested that headteachers practicing democratic leadership often simultaneously exhibited transformational behaviors, and vice versa. This finding made conceptual sense because both leadership styles

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

emphasized teacher empowerment, shared vision, and collaborative improvement, differing primarily in whether the emphasis fell on participatory processes (democratic) or inspirational motivation (transformational). The strong correlation between these two positive leadership styles implied that they were mutually reinforcing rather than competing alternatives, and headteachers who developed competencies in one style often naturally developed competencies in the other.

Autocratic leadership, in contrast, demonstrated weak negative correlations with both teachers' preparedness ($r = -0.241, p < 0.05$) and the other leadership styles. The negative correlation with teacher preparedness, though statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, was notably weaker than the positive correlations observed for democratic and transformational leadership. This pattern indicated that autocratic leadership behaviors—characterized by unilateral decision-making, limited consultation with teachers, strict hierarchical control, and directive communication—tended to slightly diminish teachers' preparedness. The negative relationship made conceptual sense because autocratic leadership could undermine teachers' professional autonomy, reduce their sense of ownership over their work, limit their access to collaborative learning opportunities, and create work environments characterized by compliance rather than commitment. Teachers working under autocratic leaders might prepare minimally to meet explicit requirements without investing the discretionary effort that characterized truly excellent preparation. However, the relative weakness of this correlation suggested that autocratic leadership's detrimental effects were limited, possibly because other factors such as teachers' intrinsic professionalism, external accountability pressures, or commitment to students partially buffered against negative leadership influences. The negative correlations between autocratic leadership and both democratic ($r = -0.425, p < 0.01$) and transformational leadership ($r = -0.398, p < 0.01$) confirmed that autocratic approaches were fundamentally incompatible with participatory and inspirational leadership, representing opposing management philosophies. These negative inter-correlations suggested that headteachers tended toward either collaborative/inspirational approaches or directive approaches, but rarely combined elements of both orientations effectively.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Leadership Styles Predicting Teachers' Preparedness

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	.819	.671	.667	169.42	.000
Predictors	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.821	0.235		3.494	.001
Democratic Leadership	0.589	0.082	.493	7.183	.000
Transformational Leadership	0.351	0.087	.304	4.034	.000
Autocratic Leadership	-0.118	0.065	-.106	-1.815	.071

Dependent Variable: Teachers' Preparedness

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

The multiple regression analysis provided sophisticated understanding of how different leadership styles collectively and individually predicted teachers' preparedness in Lwengo District's public secondary schools. The overall regression model demonstrated exceptional statistical robustness and explanatory power, as evidenced by multiple key indicators. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R=.819$) indicated a very strong relationship between the combined leadership styles and teachers' preparedness, suggesting that leadership approaches collectively explained substantial variance in teacher readiness. The coefficient of determination ($R^2=.671$) revealed that leadership styles accounted for 67.1% of the variance in teachers' preparedness, an remarkably high proportion that underscored leadership's paramount importance in determining teacher effectiveness. This finding meant that more than two-thirds of the differences in teachers' preparedness across Lwengo District could be attributed to variations in headteachers' leadership styles, while only approximately one-third resulted from other factors such as teachers' individual characteristics, resource availability, school infrastructure, or external influences. The adjusted R^2 value of .667, which accounted for the number of predictors in the model, remained nearly identical to the unadjusted R^2 , confirming that the model's explanatory power was genuine rather than artificially inflated by including multiple predictors. The F-statistic of 169.42 with significance at $p<.000$ provided overwhelming evidence that the overall regression model was statistically significant, meaning the probability that these results occurred by chance was infinitesimally small. Collectively, these statistics demonstrated that leadership styles represented crucial, empirically verified determinants of teachers' preparedness in secondary schools.

Examining individual predictors within the regression model revealed nuanced insights into each leadership style's unique contribution to teacher preparedness. Democratic leadership emerged as the strongest and most significant predictor, with an unstandardized regression coefficient (B) of 0.589 and a standardized coefficient (β) of .493. The unstandardized coefficient indicated that for every one-unit increase in democratic leadership behaviors on the measurement scale, teachers' preparedness increased by 0.589 units, holding other leadership styles constant. The standardized coefficient, which controlled for differences in measurement scales across variables, revealed that democratic leadership made the largest relative contribution to predicting teacher preparedness among all leadership styles. With a t-value of 7.183 and significance at $p<.000$, the democratic leadership coefficient was highly statistically significant, providing strong confidence in its predictive validity. This finding confirmed that participatory leadership approaches—characterized by collaborative decision-making, teacher empowerment, open communication, and shared governance—constituted the most powerful leadership mechanism for enhancing teacher preparedness. The substantial predictive power of democratic leadership suggested that when headteachers genuinely involved teachers in school management, sought their expertise, valued their contributions, and treated them as professional partners rather than subordinates, teachers responded with elevated commitment to thorough preparation. This relationship likely operated through multiple mechanisms, including enhanced teacher motivation stemming from feeling respected and valued, improved access to collegial support and collaborative planning opportunities, greater alignment

between school policies and teachers' practical needs resulting from their input in decision-making, and stronger sense of ownership over school initiatives leading to more conscientious implementation.

Transformational leadership also demonstrated significant predictive power, though with somewhat smaller magnitude than democratic leadership. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.351 indicated that each unit increase in transformational leadership corresponded with a 0.351-unit increase in teacher preparedness, while the standardized coefficient of .304 revealed its substantial relative contribution to the prediction model. The t-value of 4.034 with significance at $p < .000$ confirmed that transformational leadership was a statistically significant predictor independent of other leadership styles. These results indicated that inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence—the core components of transformational leadership—meaningfully enhanced teachers' preparedness. Headteachers who articulated compelling visions for educational excellence, challenged teachers to innovate and excel, provided personalized support matching individual developmental needs, and modeled exemplary professionalism inspired teachers to invest greater effort in preparation. The somewhat smaller coefficient compared to democratic leadership might reflect practical realities of teaching work: while inspiration and vision were motivating, the tangible support, resources, and collaborative opportunities facilitated by democratic participation might have provided more direct assistance for the day-to-day work of lesson planning, instructional delivery, and professional development. Nevertheless, transformational leadership's significant contribution confirmed its importance as a complementary leadership approach that, when combined with democratic practices, created optimal conditions for teacher preparedness.

Autocratic leadership presented a markedly different pattern, with an unstandardized coefficient of -0.118 and a standardized coefficient of -.106, both carrying negative signs indicating inverse relationships with teacher preparedness. The negative coefficient suggested that increases in autocratic leadership behaviors were associated with decreases in teachers' preparedness, confirming the detrimental nature of directive, authoritarian management approaches. However, the t-value of -1.815 with significance at $p = .071$ indicated that this negative effect approached but did not quite reach conventional statistical significance at the $p < .05$ threshold. This borderline significance suggested that autocratic leadership's negative impact on teacher preparedness, while present, was relatively modest when democratic and transformational leadership were simultaneously considered in the model. Several interpretations of this pattern were plausible. First, the limited direct negative effect might indicate that autocratic leadership's primary harm lay not in actively undermining preparation but in failing to provide the support and empowerment that enhanced it. Second, in contexts where some democratic or transformational leadership coexisted with autocratic tendencies, the positive influences might partially offset autocratic impacts. Third, teachers' professional commitment and external accountability pressures might maintain baseline preparation standards even under unfavorable leadership. Nevertheless, the negative coefficient, combined with the statistically significant negative correlation observed earlier, provided clear evidence that autocratic leadership represented an ineffective and potentially counterproductive approach for school management when teacher preparedness was the desired outcome.

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

The research by Ximenes and Silva (2024), finding no significant positive effects of autocratic leadership on teacher performance, corroborated these results and reinforced the conclusion that directive, non-participatory leadership failed to support teacher effectiveness.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study established that headteachers' leadership styles significantly influenced teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools in Lwengo District, Uganda. Democratic leadership emerged as the most prevalent and influential style, demonstrating the strongest positive relationship with teachers' preparedness. Teachers working under democratically-oriented headteachers exhibited superior lesson planning capabilities, more effective instructional delivery, and higher engagement in professional development activities. The participatory nature of democratic leadership fostered ownership, motivation, and commitment among teachers, which translated into enhanced preparedness.

Transformational leadership also positively impacted teachers' preparedness, though with slightly less magnitude than democratic approaches. Headteachers who inspired teachers through clear vision, provided individualized support, and stimulated intellectual growth cultivated environments where teachers continuously improved their professional competencies. The combination of democratic and transformational leadership created optimal conditions for teacher development and preparedness.

Conversely, autocratic leadership demonstrated negative associations with teacher preparedness, albeit with limited statistical significance. This suggested that directive, top-down management approaches neither enhanced nor substantially hindered teacher readiness when other positive leadership behaviors were present. However, schools where autocratic tendencies dominated likely experienced diminished teacher motivation, reduced professional initiative, and lower preparedness levels.

The findings affirmed that effective school leadership was not merely about administrative efficiency but fundamentally about creating supportive, collaborative environments that enabled teachers to thrive. The high variance in teachers' preparedness explained by leadership styles underscored the critical role of headteachers as catalysts for teacher development and, ultimately, improved educational outcomes.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Leadership Training and Development

The Ministry of Education and Sports should design and implement comprehensive leadership training programs for headteachers emphasizing democratic and transformational leadership competencies. These programs should focus on participatory decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, teacher empowerment strategies, and inspirational communication skills. Pre-service training for aspiring school leaders and in-service professional development for current headteachers should prioritize these leadership approaches.

2. Mentorship and Coaching Systems

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

The District Education Office should establish structured mentorship programs pairing experienced headteachers demonstrating effective democratic leadership with novice school leaders. Regular coaching sessions, peer learning communities, and leadership forums would facilitate knowledge exchange and continuous improvement in leadership practices.

3. Policy Reforms for Participatory Management

Educational policies should be reviewed to institutionalize participatory school governance structures, including functional school management committees, teacher representative councils, and collaborative planning frameworks. These structures would formalize democratic processes, ensuring sustainable teacher involvement in school decision-making.

4. Performance Appraisal Integration

Headteachers' performance evaluations should include specific indicators measuring democratic and transformational leadership behaviors, such as teacher consultation frequency, collaborative initiative implementation, and teacher professional development support. This would incentivize adoption of effective leadership styles.

5. Teacher Preparedness Support Systems

Schools should establish dedicated professional learning communities where teachers collaboratively plan lessons, share best practices, and engage in peer observation. Headteachers should allocate resources—time, materials, and financial support—for continuous professional development opportunities, ensuring sustained teacher preparedness enhancement.

6. Further Research

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to track leadership style impacts on teacher preparedness over extended periods, investigate the relationship in private secondary schools for comparative analysis, and explore mediating variables such as school resources, teacher motivation, and organizational culture that might influence the leadership-preparedness relationship.

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