Leadership Styles and Students' Academic Achievement: Examining the Impact of Democratic Leadership in Public Secondary Schools in Tabora Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study examined the influence of democratic leadership style on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, Tanzania. Guided by Participative Leadership Theory and grounded in pragmatism, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing a convergent parallel research design. The study involved 218 respondents, comprising teachers, heads of schools, and students obtained using random and purposeful sampling techniques. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to teachers, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with heads of schools and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and thematic analysis for quantitative and qualitative respectively. The results indicated a strong positive relationship between democratic leadership style and students' academic performance (r = 0.73, p < 0.05). The findings suggest that school leaders should adopt motivational and inclusive practices, maintain supportive and well-resourced environments, and engage stakeholders to optimize students' academic performance.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership, Secondary Schools, Public Secondary schools, Academic Achievement*

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1. Introduction

Leadership plays a vital role in shaping students' academic performance. The leadership styles of school leaders can promote a supportive environment for learning, thus leading to both teachers' motivation and students' outcomes (Leithwood et al. 2020). The leadership styles can determine the overall progress of the school (Avolio, 2023). School leaders may apply various leadership styles, such as transformational, democratic, transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles, for the purpose of managing their institutions effectively and appropriately (Bush & Glover, 2020). School leader practices leadership styles in diverse contexts depending on the contexts (Hallinger, 2022). Leadership in schools is more than just managing resources because it involves inspiring the staff, creating a positive school culture, fostering student engagement, and ensuring that academic and other operational goals of the school are fulfilled (Adeyemi, 2017).

Worldwide, school efficiency is a significant display of a nation's educational achievement, and it is highly influenced by many factors, including the leadership style of school administrators (Leithwood et al. 2020). Various leadership styles can influence school progress, success, and outcomes. In schools, leaders are more responsible for setting a vision, motivating teachers and students, and ensuring that the educational institution functions properly (Robinson, 2020). The type of leadership being practised by the school leaders can considerably determine the school environment, influence teachers' instructional strategies, and impact students' academic performance (Noble, 2019).

A wide array of studies in America and other parts of the world have maintained the significance of school leadership style and students' academic performance. The school leadership style that is characterised by visionary, inspiring, and motivating actions has been linked to enhanced student learning outcomes (Leithwood et al. 2016). Similarly, the democratic leadership style has been reported to create a supportive learning environment for both teachers and students. The teachers become intrinsically motivated for work because of being valued by the entire school leadership, which involves them in planning and decision-making processes (Day & Sammons, 2016). The school leadership style, which focuses on inspiring and motivating the staff, is closely connected with higher levels of student and school academic achievement (Spillane & Lattanzio, 2021). Studies on leadership styles and students' achievement carried out in Brazil and Argentina have reported consistently that democratic leadership practices, which involve teachers and students in decision-making processes, improve teachers' satisfaction and students' engagement (Gómez & Fernández, 2023).

Likewise, in Europe, countries such as Finland and the Netherlands, school leadership styles contribute much to improving the learners' success and creating a supportive learning environment, which influences both educators and learners. The school's successes are realised when the entire workers have confidence in their leaders, and they like to work hard in order to accomplish the school's vision and mission (Oraifan, 2021). In Asia, countries such as China, Japan, and the Philippines, school leadership focuses on working closely with teachers and students for the purpose of developing a common vision and supporting teacher professional development linked to an effective leadership style with the intention of improving classroom teaching and learning (Zhang & Liu, 2022; Gaspar, 2022). In Africa, school leadership is significant in determining educational outcomes. For instance, in Nigeria, Morocco, and Ethiopia, leadership styles, particularly the democratic leadership style, play a great role in advancing school performance through creating goals with the school community (Oluwatoyin & Durojaiye, 2023; Berhanu & Nomalanga, 2022; Benjelloun, 2020).

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 emphasises 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 (URT, 2023). However, the use of leadership styles varies across regions and schools. In those school leaders adopt a combination of leadership styles due to resource constraints and challenges of managing large classrooms and inclusivity (Mkumbo & Mbwilo, 2021). Despite these efforts being made by the Government of Tanzania through policy intervention, leadership programmes initiatives, resource allocation and improving school infrastructure, growing concern exists regarding students' academic performance in public secondary schools in the country, Tabora included (Mussa & Kisalaya, 2023; Ngowi & Nsamba, 2022). While extensive research has highlighted leadership styles and students' academic performance, there is an insufficiency of studies in this context that focus on public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, a gap that underscores a need to investigate how democratic leadership style impacts students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Educational leadership is vital for improving school quality and effectiveness. In Tanzania, efforts such as professional development programs for school leaders which aim to enhance management, decision-making and resource use have been implemented (Bergmark & Lundström, 2021). However, challenges persist in public secondary schools due to limited understanding and application of effective democratic leadership style among the school leaders (Mkumbo & Mbwilo, 2021). This situation negatively affects school improvement, teacher morale and student engagement (Mziray, 2021). Despite previous studies on democratic leadership style, little empirical research has examined how it influences students' academic achievements in Tabora Municipality. This study addresses that gap by examining the impact of democratic leadership style on students' academic achievements in selected public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, Tanzania.

1.2 Research Objective / Question

1.2.1 Research Objective

This study was guided by the following specific objective: To examine the impact of democratic leadership style on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality Tanzania.

1.2.2 Research Question

This study was guided by this research question: What is the impact of the democratic leadership style on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality Tanzania?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Participative leadership theory can be traced to the 1930s and 1940s with the writings of behavioural scientists such as Kurt Lewin, Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris, and Michael Porter (Kaufman, 2001). The theory was further formalised by Rensis Likert in 1961 in his book *"New Patterns of Management,"* which outlined its core principles like mutual support, group decision-making, and higher standards (Likert, 1961). The theory is based on the assumptions that a leader involves team members in the decision-making process, emphasises collaboration, open communication and shared input, but the leader retains the final authority to make the decision (Obeng & Korang, 2024). The participative leadership theory is characterised by inclusivity, collaboration and teamwork, open communication and mutual support. The theory purports that when individuals are allowed to share their opinions, ideas, and experiences, they feel valued and respected, which enhances their motivation, morale and commitment to the organisational goals (Ngowi & Nsamba, 2022). Based on this theory, therefore, a democratic leader acts as a facilitator, encouraging open communication and teamwork while maintaining the authority to make final decisions.

The theory is highly suitable for this study because it directly reflects the principles of democratic leadership style, where decisions are made collectively and every member's voice is considered.

In schools, democratic leadership allows heads of schools, teachers, and students to engage in discussions about academic policies, teaching methods, and learning strategies. This inclusiveness enhances ownership of academic goals and fosters accountability, which can lead to improved teaching quality and students' achievement. The strengths of participative leadership theory include increased job satisfaction, enhanced motivation, improved team spirit, and higher productivity due to shared responsibility. However, its weaknesses involve slower decision-making as it requires time for consultation and consensus-building, and it may lead to disagreements or inefficiency when followers lack the expertise or willingness to participate effectively. Despite these limitations, participative leadership theory remains one of the most effective approaches in educational settings where inclusivity, collaboration, involvement in the decision-making process, open communication, and shared vision are essential for creating a supportive teaching and learning environment, in turn improving students' achievement.

2.2 Empirical Review

Several studies have demonstrated a strong linkage between leadership styles and students' achievement. Jony et al. (2019) investigated the impact of democratic leadership styles on organisational success within school institutions in Bangladesh. The study employed 152 questionnaires and interviews for gathering data among teachers and students. Data were analysed through statistical techniques and thematic analysis. Results pointed out that democratic leadership positively influences educational success by fostering employee motivation and satisfaction. It also highlighted that all school leaders, teachers, and students within the school feel valued by being involved in opportunities for formulating and implementing plans and decisions. However, the study's concentration on a specific region hinders its practical conclusions within diverse locations in Bangladesh. Maqbool et al. (2024) investigated the effects of democratic leadership styles on sustaining academic performance in high schools in Multan, Punjab, Pakistan. He collected data from 358 high school teachers by means of a questionnaire. Moreover, the data were analysed using SPSS. The study indicated that democratic leadership resulted in good academic performance. The study suggests that democratic leadership styles create unity among the teachers and students, thus enhancing academic success.

Augustine and Rebekah (2024) explored the influence of democratic leadership on teachers' and students' motivation and job performance in selected public secondary schools in Monze District, Southern Province, Zambia. They gathered data using a questionnaire administered to 130 teachers and used descriptive statistics. Findings indicated that democratic leadership was most appropriate for creating a motivating work and learning environment. However, the study primarily focuses on teachers' perspectives, thus its findings may not directly

translate to student achievements. Obeng and Korang (2024) investigated the effect of democratic leadership on the performance of students in selected schools in Ghana's Bono region. It was intended to determine if democratic leadership was practised, its relationship with employee performance, and its overall impact. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 231 respondents and analysed using descriptive and correlation analysis. The results revealed that democratic leadership positively influenced students' performance, accounting for a 41.1% improvement. The study highlighted that involving staff in decision-making fosters teamwork and cooperation, enhancing performance. However, the research was limited to administrative staff, suggesting a need for broader studies across different sectors to generalise findings. Thus, this study intended to fill by examining the impact of democratic leadership on students' performance in public secondary schools, involving heads of schools, teachers, and students.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a convergent parallel research design and a mixed methods approach. A convergent research design is a fundamental approach where the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously for gaining a thorough understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study employed a mixed methods approach in order to integrate both **quantitative and qualitative** data collection and analysis within a single study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Qualitative approach focused on exploring and gaining insights into social phenomena, uncovering the meanings individuals assign to situations or events. It also helps develop a deeper understanding of values that emphasise the significance of individuals' subjective experiences (Leavy, 2023).

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in seven selected public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, which is located in the Tabora region of Tanzania. The selected schools included Tabora Boys, Cheyo, Ipuli, Isevya, Kariakoo, Milambo, and Tabora Girls, which were among the 29 public secondary schools found in the municipality. These schools were chosen because they represent a diverse range of school contexts where different leadership styles were practised by heads of schools, thereby providing a suitable ground to examine the influence of democratic leadership on students' academic achievements. Moreover, the area was particularly relevant for this study because it encompasses schools with varying administrative structures, leadership effectiveness, teacher-student compositions and students' academic achievement (Chongo & Nuhu, 2023; Mkumbo & Mbwilo, 2021). These schools were identified by their names with permission from the relevant education authorities to ensure transparency in the research process while maintaining confidentiality of individual participants.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study included 260 teachers, 56 students, and 7 heads of schools from the sampled public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. Therefore, the total population from which the study obtained was 218. To obtain a sample size for the teachers, the study adopted Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table of sample size determination and purposive sampling for students and heads of schools, respectively. Krejcie & Morgan (1970)'s table of sample size determination suggested a sample of 155 teachers, while purposive sampling was used to obtain 56 Form Three and Four students and 7 heads of schools from sampled public secondary schools. However, a total of 143 of 155 questionnaires were returned, yielding a return rate of 92.26%. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample size determination is a widely recognised tool in research that is mostly employed for the purpose of estimating the appropriate sample size needed from the target population based on a known population size (Bukhari, 2021). Therefore, the total sample size for the study was 218 respondents, including 155 teachers, 56 students, 8 from each school, and 7 heads of schools, one from each of the selected public secondary schools in Tabora municipality, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Population

School	Teachers	Students	Heads of School	Total
Tabora Boys	27	8	1	**36**
Cheyo	16	8	1	**25**
Ipuli	28	8	1	**37**
Isevya	22	8	1	**31**
Kariakoo	19	8	1	**28**
Milambo	20	8	1	**29**
Tabora Girls	23	8	1	**32**
Total	**155**	**56**	**7**	**218**

Source: Field Data (2025)

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The study employed random and purposive sampling techniques to recruit participants into the study based on specific characteristics relevant to the study objective. Specifically, random sampling was applied to select teachers from seven public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. Stratified sampling was used to first group teachers into strata according to their respective schools, and then they were selected randomly within each stratum to ensure that both groups were proportionally and fairly represented (Kene, 2021). Purposive sampling was used to recruit 7 heads of schools and 56 Form Three and Four students. Specifically, criterion sampling was used to select seven public secondary schools and heads of schools thereof. Within each selected school, students who participated in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were chosen using a convenience sampling technique, based on their availability and willingness to participate at the time of data collection.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This study employed questionnaires, interviews and FGDs to collect data from study participants. Structured questionnaires consisting of closed-ended items developed on a Likert scale were administered to teachers from all the sampled public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. The use of questionnaires by teachers allowed the collection of standardised responses from a relatively large sample in a cost-effective manner while ensuring confidentiality (Bryman, 2021; McMillan & Schumacher, 2021). In addition, face-to-face structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with heads of schools who occupy key leadership and administrative roles. This method facilitated the provision of rich and in-depth information by allowing clarification of meanings, probing of responses, and deeper exploration of emerging issues, thus generating insights that could not be adequately captured through questionnaires alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Merriam & Tisdell, 2023). Each interview session lasted for one hour, thus ensuring sufficient time for in-depth discussion. Furthermore, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with students who as the direct beneficiaries of leadership practices, providing critical perspectives on the impact of democratic leadership on their academic achievement. The FGDs, which lasted about 40 - 60 minutes each, involved 7 groups, 1 group comprising 8 students from each of the sample schools.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. Quantitative data, which were collected through structured questionnaires administered to teachers, were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics using **SPSS** software. The measures, such as means and standard deviations, helped to summarise the perceptions and patterns related to school democratic leadership traits and their influence on students' academic performance. Moreover, the study employed thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with heads of schools and students in the sampled schools, respectively.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study received research clearance from the research and publication committee of the Institute of Accountancy, Arusha, and official permission was issued by the executive director of Tabora municipality, allowing the

researcher to collect data from the sampled schools. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their personal information. Written and/or oral informed consent was obtained from each participant before their involvement in the research. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without any consequences. Interviews and focus group discussions were held in designated places. FGD participants were urged to keep the information discussed within their respective groups confidential. All data collection for this study was anonymised to protect participants' privacy.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The typical respondent was predominantly male (83%), the dominant age group was 40 and above (35%), with teaching experience of 10 and above (73.5), and having a bachelor's degree (73.6) as the highest level of education, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Background description of the respondents (only teachers)

Description	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the respondent	Female	60	42
	Male	83	58
Age group of the respondents	Up to 30	49	34.2
	30 but below 40	44	30.8
	40 and above	50	35
Teaching experience in the years of the respondents	Up to 5	13	9
	5 but below 10	25	17.5
	10 and above	105	73.5
The highest level of education attained by the respondents	Diploma	47	32.9
	Bachelor degree	91	63.6
	Master's degree	5	3.5

Influence of Democratic Leadership on Students' Academic Performance

Respondents (teachers) were subjected to 10 items on democratic leadership on students' academic performance was scaled using the five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Table 3 gives the descriptive results of the items on democratic leadership and students' performance.

Table 3: Democratic Leadership Style on Academic Performance

Description	SD Count (%)	D Count (%)	N Count (%)	A Count (%)	SA Count (%)	Mean	Overall Rating	Std. Dev
Teacher involvement in decision-making makes them feel valued and responsible.	14 (9.8)	29 (20.3)	27 (18.9)	46 (32.2)	27 (18.9)	3.30	Neutral	1.262
Open communication creates a supportive environment.	9 (6.3)	27 (18.9)	20 (14.0)	47 (32.9)	40 (28.0)	3.57	Agree	1.253
Motivation makes teachers committed through leadership recognition.	11 (7.7)	26 (18.2)	23 (16.1)	48 (33.6)	35 (24.5)	3.49	Agree	1.255
Trust in teachers' judgment enhances innovation in teaching.	9 (6.3)	29 (20.3)	19 (13.3)	55 (38.5)	31 (21.7)	3.49	Agree	1.215
Teamwork enables sharing strategies that improve practices.	9 (6.3)	21 (14.7)	27 (18.9)	58 (40.6)	28 (19.6)	3.52	Agree	1.150
Inclusivity in planning ensures diverse perspectives in teaching.	10 (7.0)	28 (19.6)	25 (17.5)	48 (33.6)	32 (22.4)	3.45	Agree	1.232
Transparency in policies promotes a stable environment.	12 (8.4)	25 (17.5)	23 (16.1)	57 (39.9)	26 (18.2)	3.42	Agree	1.213
Fair conflict resolution supports teaching.	13 (9.1)	22 (15.4)	28 (19.6)	55 (38.5)	25 (17.5)	3.40	Neutral	1.205
A collaborative work environment is encouraged	10 (7.0)	26 (18.2)	25 (17.5)	51 (35.7)	31 (21.7)	3.47	Agree	1.215
Teachers tend to share responsibility for achieving school goals	10 (7.0)	23 (16.1)	24 (16.8)	54 (37.8)	32 (22.4)	3.52	Agree	1.203

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 3 on whether open communication with school leadership creates a supportive environment, the results indicated that cumulatively the majority (60.9%) agreed, as opposed to 25.2% who disagreed. The mean of 3.57, close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggested that the respondents agreed that open communication with school leadership created a supportive environment. Likewise, on whether teamwork enables sharing strategies that improve practices, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (60.2%) agreed, as opposed to 21.0% who disagreed. Considering the mean of 3.52, close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggested that the respondents agreed that teamwork enables sharing strategies that improve practices. These descriptive statistics by teachers were supported by interviews conducted with heads of schools, as one noted:

> As the head of this school, I always encourage open communication between my office and the teachers. I believe that when teachers freely express their views, it helps us address challenges more effectively. In staff meetings, I make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and share

ideas without fear of criticism. This practice has created a culture of trust whereby teachers feel that their contributions are being valued (HoS, School A, August 2025).

In terms of teachers working in a team to improve teaching and learning practices, In an interview with heads of schools, they pointed out that fostering teams have positive impact on students' learning, as one explained:

> "…we assign teams for curriculum implementation, teachers support each other by sharing their experiences on pedagogical practices, assessment and evaluation strategies, which in turn improve overall classroom performance" (HoS, School D, August 2025).

Students corroborated with what teachers and heads of schools said by linking teachers ' work, shared experiences and learning from each other to improved teaching and learning outcomes, as one noted:

> "When our teachers work together as a team, they explain concepts more clearly, and the teaching and learning processes are more effective and engaging" (student, FGD 3, August 2025).

Similarly, on whether teachers tend to share responsibilities in order to achieve school goals, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (60.2%) agreed as opposed to 23.1% who disagreed. The mean of 3.52 is close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggesting that the respondents agreed that teachers tended to share responsibilities in order to achieve school goals. Also, when it came to whether motivation makes teachers committed through leadership recognition, the results indicated that cumulatively the majority (58.1%) agreed, whereas 25.9% disagreed. The mean of 3.49, close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggested that the respondents agreed that motivation made teachers committed through leadership recognition. Furthermore, on whether trust in teachers' judgment enhances innovation in teaching, the results indicated that cumulatively the majority (60.2%) agreed, as opposed to 26.6% who disagreed. The mean of 3.49 is close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggesting that the respondents agreed that trust in teachers' judgment enhanced innovation in teaching.

In an interview with heads of schools, those who motivate their teachers acknowledged that when teachers are motivated, either through monetary incentives or by recognition, tend to be more committed and productive, as one noted:

> "For the last two or three years, the school have introduced a motivation scheme for teachers who excel in teaching, and whose subjects perform well at both school and at national levels. This has inspired other teachers to work harder by applying new approaches to enhance students' learning outcomes" (HoS, School E, August 2025)

Additionally, on whether a collaborative work environment is encouraged by leadership, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (57.4%) agreed, as opposed to 25.2% who disagreed. The mean of 3.47, close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggested that the respondents agreed that a collaborative work environment was encouraged by the leadership. Also, on whether inclusive in planning ensures diverse perspectives in teaching, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (56.0%) agreed, as opposed to 26.6% who disagreed. The mean of 3.45 is close to code 4, which corresponds to agree, suggesting that the respondents agreed that inclusivity in planning ensured diverse perspectives in teaching. Despite these trends, the results also revealed important gaps. For instance, on whether teacher involvement in decision making makes them feel valued and responsible, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (51.1%) agreed, as opposed to 30.1% who disagreed. The mean of 3.30, close to code 3, which corresponds to neutral (undecided), suggested that the respondents neither agree nor disagree

(undecided) that teacher involvement in decision making made them feel valued and responsible. Interviews conducted with heads of schools conform to this descriptive information provided by teachers that democratic leadership practices, such as collaborative work environment, inclusive planning, and participation in decision making for both teachers and students, foster academic achievement, as one narrated:

> "We frequently hold meetings with teachers, where we share plans and strategic directions of the school. In these meetings, teachers share a range of experiences on lesson planning, student engagement, and teaching strategies. Their input shapes the methodology we adopt to improve practice, and in turn improve students' performance" (HoS, School B, August 2025).

Although teachers did not seem to acknowledge the fact that their participation in decision-making enhances their productivity and overall academic achievement, interview and focus group discussions with heads of school and students, respectively, revealed a different opinion. Some heads of school reported that, when teachers participate in the decision-making process, including setting academic targets, they feel more responsible and have a sense of ownership, leading to school improvement. Focus group discussions with students revealed that involvement of students in decision-making bodies is of paramount importance, as it positively influences their motivation, ultimately contributing to their school academic achievement.

Also, on whether fair conflict resolution reduces tension and supports teaching, the results showed that cumulatively the majority (56.0%) agreed, as opposed to 24.5% who disagreed. The mean of 3.40, close to code 3, which corresponded to neutral (undecided), suggested that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (undecided) that fair conflict resolution reduced tension and supported teaching. These neutral responses by respondents (teachers) point to the disconnect between the ideals of democratic leadership style and its practice in schools, where some teachers feel excluded from critical decision-making processes. This indicated that not all teachers experience democratic leadership practices consistently; thus, the presence of neutral responses underscores that democratic leadership style is not uniformly applied and may sometimes be symbolic rather than practical.

Regression Analysis

Tables 4 to 6 present regression analysis results indicating the degree to which democratic leadership style accounts for the academic performance differences in public secondary schools, giving evidence of a significant

influence that supports further reference to the study objective.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	.137	.395		.346	.730	-.645	.918
Democratic Leadership Style	.595	.067	.461	8.848	.000	.462	.728

Table 4 presents the regression analysis coefficients, which revealed distinct patterns of influence. The democratic leadership style shows a positive and statistically significant effect on students' academic performance (r = 0.73, p < 0.05). This can be explained by the regression equation y 0.137+0.595x (where y represents students' academic achievement and x represents a democratic leadership style), indicating that a one-unit increase in democratic leadership practices was associated with a 0.595 - unit rise in students' academic performance while holding other factors constant.. The constant value of 0.137 indicates the predicted level of students' academic achievement when the democratic leadership style is not applied, serving as the baseline outcome in the absence of this leadership influence.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.790	.624	.616	.7631192

Table 5 presents the model summary for the direct effect of democratic leadership styles on students' academic performance. The model showed a strong positive relationship with an R value of 0.790, which indicated a substantial correlation between democratic leadership and academic performance. The R-squared of 0.624 suggested that approximately 62.4 per cent of the variation in students' academic performance can be explained by the
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influence of democratic leadership style. The adjusted R-squared of 0.616 accounted for the number of predictors and indicated a reliable model fit. The standard error of 0.763 reflected a relatively small deviation between the observed and predicted values, thus implying that the model provided a consistent and strong explanation of the influence of democratic leadership style on students' academic performance.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	134.487	3	44.829	76.980	.000
	Residual	80.947	139	.582		
	Total	215.434	142			

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model, assessing the overall significance of the relationship between democratic leadership style and students' academic performance. The model produced p = 0.000 < 0.05 significance level, indicating that the regression model was statistically significant and that democratic leadership style had a strong effect on students' academic performance.

4.2 Discussion

The results indicate that a democratic leadership style positively impacted students' academic performance. In particular, the study revealed that democratic leadership practices such as open communication, inclusive teaching and learning environment, collaboration and teamwork, involvement and participation in decision making, motivation and recognition, among others, influenced students' learning outcomes. These findings are in line with those of Ferdinand (2023), who found that democratic leadership positively impacted academic performance through enhancing open communication and collaboration. Similarly, the findings found that a conducive and inclusive teaching and learning environment, where teachers and students feel supported and valued and their opinions are valued, tends to be more motivated and committed towards academic achievement. The findings concur with those of Bukar and Dawa (2024), who found that when teachers feel recognized and involved in decision making, they become more psychologically motivated to improve their professional development, collaborate with colleagues and focus on strategies that enhance students' learning and overall school performance. Likewise, teachers who felt empowered and valued under democratic leadership were more motivated, engaged and responsible for students' learning needs. Importantly, this study showed that the positive effects of democratic leadership extend beyond teacher motivation to tangible students' performance indicators through creating a motivating working and learning environment (Augustine & Rebekah, 2024). This confirms the notion that democratic leadership significantly shapes the educational environment, which in turn influences learning outcomes. A similar finding was also revealed by Ferdinand and Kiwonde (2023), who reported that democratic leadership style promotes positive academic performance by enabling effective classroom participation and early homework completion.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study findings revealed that democratic leadership practices significantly influenced students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. Particularly, democratic leadership practices such as open communication and mutual respect, shared responsibility, inclusive teaching and learning environment, and participatory decision-making foster teacher engagement and a sense of ownership over educational objectives, which in turn enhance classroom practices and student learning outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, it is recommended that school leaders adopt and strengthen democratic leadership practices to enhance students' academic performance. Heads of schools should allow and promote open communication, actively involve teachers and students in decision-making, encourage collaboration, and foster an inclusive and supportive teaching environment where teachers feel valued and responsible for educational outcomes. Schools should create mechanisms for regular communication between parents and teachers, encourage parental participation in school activities and provide effective guidance on how parents can support the learning of students at home. Finally, the government at local and national levels should invest in safe, well-resourced, and conducive learning environments such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories as an important component for maximizing the benefits of democratic leadership in schools.

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