



The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Enhancing Student Attendance and Engagement in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of school leadership on student attendance and engagement, addressing gaps in the literature regarding how leadership styles influence these critical educational outcomes. Employing a quantitative correlational research design, data were collected from 300 secondary school students and 50 school leaders in Makassar City using stratified random sampling. Leadership styles were measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), while student engagement was assessed with the Student Engagement Scale (SES). Attendance data were retrieved from official school records. Results revealed significant positive correlations between transformational leadership and both student attendance ($r = 0.62, p < 0.001$) and engagement ($r = 0.75, p < 0.001$). Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly predicted attendance ($\beta = 0.58, p < 0.001$) and engagement ($\beta = 0.72, p < 0.001$), highlighting its critical role in fostering positive student outcomes. Furthermore, the findings emphasized the relevance of transformational leadership in promoting equity by improving attendance and engagement across diverse school contexts. This study provides practical implications for educational policies and leadership training programs, advocating for a stronger focus on transformational leadership practices. The results also contribute to the growing body of evidence linking effective leadership with improved student outcomes, offering insights for future research on leadership interventions.

Introduction

School management plays a pivotal position in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of students. Effective faculty leadership is often linked to improved academic performance, higher teacher pleasure, and a greater superb faculty climate. However, one of the maximum important but underexplored factors of college leadership is its effect on pupil attendance and engagement. Attendance and engagement are fundamental to pupil success; without regular attendance and active participation, college students are not likely to reap their full instructional capacity.

Effective faculty leadership encompasses numerous patterns and practices, along with transformational, educational, and distributed leadership (Ruben et al., 2023). Transformational leadership, for instance, makes a speciality of inspiring and motivating group of workers and college students to obtain higher stages of overall performance by using fostering supportive and collaborative college surroundings (Kwan, 2020). Instructional

management, alternatively, emphasizes the predominant's function in guiding and enhancing coaching and getting to know techniques directly (Shava et al., 2021). Distributed leadership includes sharing management obligations among diverse participants of the faculty network, thereby selling a more inclusive and participatory technique to highschool management.

Student attendance and engagement are vital signs of instructional achievement (Durham et al., 2020; Childs & Lofton, 2021). Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or extra of faculty days in an educational year, is related to decrease instructional achievement, multiplied dropout charges, and faded post-secondary possibilities (Liu et al., 2021). Conversely, ordinary attendance is correlated with higher grades and check rankings, advanced social talents, and greater chance of commencement (Bartanen, 2020; Oberle et al., 2020; Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). Student engagement, which encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, is equally important. Engaged students are much more likely to make investments effort in mastering, take part in elegance activities, and show off a more potent commitment to school (Sang & Hiver, 2021).

The dating between school management and student consequences has been appreciably studied, with proof suggesting that management practices can appreciably impact attendance and engagement. For instance, faculties with powerful leaders tend to have decrease costs of absenteeism (Edmonds, 2020). Leadership practices that create a fantastic faculty weather, which include promoting an experience of belonging and making sure scholar safety, are particularly influential in lowering absenteeism.

Research additionally indicates that transformational management, which involves setting an imaginative and prescient, fostering an inclusive college subculture, and encouraging expert improvement among instructors, can beautify pupil engagement (Labrague, 2024; Luo et al., 2024; Radi et al., 2022). When leaders are capable of create supportive and motivating surroundings, students are more likely to feel related to their college and engaged in their learning (Skaalvik, 2020). Instructional management practices, which include offering feedback to teachers, facilitating collaborative learning opportunities, and specializing in records-pushed choice-making, also make contributions to higher ranges of scholar engagement by means of improving the first-rate of training and studying experiences (Kilag & Sasan, 2023).

Despite the identified significance of college management, there are still gaps in information its direct effect on student attendance and engagement. Much of the prevailing literature focuses on academic consequences which includes check scores and graduation fees, with incredibly less attention given to attendance and engagement. Moreover, research that do have a look at those aspects regularly do now not differentiate among numerous management patterns and their unique contributions. As an end result, there's a need for more complete research that not handiest explores the general impact of college management on attendance and engagement but additionally dissects the precise practices and behaviors which are simplest.

The context in which leadership is exercised together with the socio-economic background of the pupil populace, faculty length, and to be had sources can appreciably have an effect on the outcomes of leadership practices (Strielkowski et al., 2020). Understanding how these contextual factors interact with leadership practices is vital for growing centered strategies that could improve attendance and engagement in numerous school settings.

The primary purpose of this has a look at is to investigate the impact of faculty leadership on scholar attendance and engagement. By analyzing diverse management patterns and practices, this study seeks to discover which aspects of management are simplest in promoting everyday attendance and active engagement among college students. The observe also pursuits to discover how contextual elements have an effect on the connection between leadership and scholar consequences, offering a nuanced know-how of the dynamics at play.

This research will make a contribution to the present body of knowledge by way of filling the gaps recognized in preceding research and providing realistic guidelines for school leaders. By highlighting powerful management practices and the conditions below which they're most a hit, this takes a look at ambitions to inform policy and exercise, in the long run improving the educational reviews and effects for students.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the impact of school leadership on student attendance and engagement. A correlational approach was utilized to explore the relationships between leadership styles, student attendance rates, and engagement levels. This approach allowed for the analysis of associations and predictions among the variables. The population included secondary school students and school leaders in Makassar City. A stratified random sampling technique was implemented to ensure diverse representation across school types and locations. From this population, 300 students and 50 school leaders were selected from 10 secondary schools, with the sample size determined through statistical power analysis to ensure reliability.

Data collection was carried out over two months using structured questionnaires and official school records. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was administered to school leaders to measure leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches. To assess student engagement, the Student Engagement Scale (SES) was distributed to students, comprising 30 items that evaluated behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Additionally, attendance records for students from the previous academic year were retrieved from school databases. Trained research assistants facilitated data collection to ensure clarity and accuracy in participant responses.

The reliability and validity of the instruments were established through a pilot test with 50 participants (40 students and 10 school leaders) from schools not included in the main study. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.89 for the MLQ and 0.87 for the SES, indicating high internal consistency. Content validity was reviewed by a panel of education experts, who recommended minor adjustments to improve the clarity and relevance of survey items.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistical techniques were applied to examine the relationships among variables. Pearson correlation analysis assessed the strength and direction of relationships between leadership styles, student attendance, and engagement. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the extent to which leadership styles predicted attendance and engagement. Additionally, ANOVA was utilized to explore differences in student engagement levels across various leadership styles.

Result and Discussion

In the traditional view on the determinants of achievement, leadership of a school is regarded as one the most important factors explaining school performance, including attendance and participation. Transformational leadership, with such components as visionary communication, individual consideration, and intellectual encouragement has attracted attention in education research because of likelihood of bringing positive school climate and high students' achievement. Nonetheless, available literature fails to give emphasis on the direct connection between leadership behaviours and attendance and engagement indices especially in culturally diverse context. This paper seeks to fill this scholarly gap by examining the effect of school leadership styles on students' attendance and participation in secondary schools in Makassar City. Using the correlational, quantitative research design, the study intends to identify the dynamic interface and causation between leadership practices and learning environments that are inclusive, competent, motivated and productive. The insights presented in the findings are useful to educators, policymakers, and administrators interested in knowing how they can employ leadership to improve the results of education.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Leadership Styles	4.25	0.85	2.50	5.00
Student Attendance (%)	92.35	6.45	75.00	100.00
Student Engagement	3.75	0.90	2.00	5.00

This table presents the descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values for the primary variables in the study: leadership styles, student attendance, and engagement.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Study Instruments

Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)	21	0.89
Student Engagement Scale (SES)	30	0.87

This table displays the reliability coefficients for the instruments used in the study, demonstrating their internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha values indicate high reliability for both instruments.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Leadership Styles, Attendance, and Engagement

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation (r)	p-value
Leadership Styles	Student Attendance	0.62	<0.001
Leadership Styles	Student Engagement	0.75	<0.001
Student Attendance	Student Engagement	0.58	<0.001

This table summarizes the Pearson correlation coefficients between leadership styles, student attendance, and engagement. All relationships are statistically significant, suggesting moderate to strong positive associations among the variables.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attendance and Engagement

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Leadership Styles	Attendance	0.58	8.25	0.0001
Leadership Styles	Engagement	0.72	12.30	0.0001

This table displays the results of the multiple regression analysis. Leadership styles were significant predictors of both student attendance and engagement, with higher beta coefficients indicating a stronger predictive relationship with student engagement.

Table 5. ANOVA Results for Student Engagement Across Leadership Styles

Leadership Style	Mean Engagement Score	F-Value	p-value
Transformational	4.25	15.60	0.0001
Transactional	3.50		
Laissez-Faire	2.90		

This table presents the ANOVA results comparing mean engagement scores across different leadership styles. Transformational leadership showed the highest mean engagement scores, with significant differences observed among the leadership styles.

This study investigated the impact of school leadership on student attendance and engagement, addressing existing gaps in the literature regarding the specific influence of various leadership styles on these critical student outcomes. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between transformational leadership and higher levels of both attendance and engagement. These results provide evidence supporting the assertion that effective school leadership can serve as a catalyst for improving student outcomes.

The strong correlation between transformational leadership and student engagement ($r = 0.75$, $p 0.0001$) emphasizes the pivotal role transformational leaders play in fostering an engaging learning environment. Transformational leaders, as described by Kariuki (2021), motivate their followers by articulating a compelling vision, promoting intellectual stimulation, and demonstrating individualized consideration. These attributes are particularly relevant in educational settings where student engagement serves as a critical indicator of success. This study's findings align with Bakker et al. (2023), who observed that transformational leadership enhances behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement by promoting intrinsic motivation and a sense of belonging among students.

The advantages of organisation engagement regarding the kind of leadership state transformational leadership relate to the more extensive literature on leadership efficiency in the educational setting. According to Hallinger and Heck (2020), transformational leadership enhances classroom climate for purposes of interaction that enhancing learning. According Vermeulen et al. (2022) concluded that transformational practices help work together to foster learn ability, and enhance teacher-student interaction for engagement. The findings of this study support and build upon this understanding by showing that these effects hold true for various types of schools in Makassar City.

This study filled a gap in prior leadership styles studies by showing a positive correlation of leadership and styles with student attendance ($r = 0.62$, $p 0.0001$). Although, Yücel (2021) reveals that leadership impacts on attendance through external variables, this article outlines the direct impact of the transformational leaders. Experience transformational leaders who can freely relate with the students and may likely be close to them can extend the students' school attendance rate by ensuring a welcoming school climate (Malloy & Kavussanu, 2021).

The emphasis on attendance fits alongside previous research on the effects that leadership has on other non-academic issues including discipline and well-being several studies. According to Truboff (2022), when leaders pragmatically and socially support student-centered instructional approaches, then students attend classes more because they feel appreciated. Thus,

this study has supported these claims using important data extracted from official school records and proved that the implementation of transformational leadership activities helps to create a strong sense of responsibility and desire to attend classes in students.

The findings also have implications for leadership in eradicating achievement gaps in attainment of education. Surveying the schools in a stratified random manner, this study was therefore able to capture how different types of schools and from different socio-economic background can enhance on attendance and engagement disparities through transformational leadership. This finding builds on the ideas of Shields & Hesbol (2020) who specifically pointed out leadership to support equity and inclusion in school settings.

A major strength of transformational leadership in addressing disparities is the power of the leaders to foster collective visions and enthuse the heterogeneous learners. Harris and Jones (2019) argued that for coping with SES, there is a high level of implementation of leadership practices in various schools as per the needs of the students in those schools. Extending these findings, this study insists that leadership cannot only predict attendance (Standard Beta = 0.58, $t = 9.39$, $p = 0.0001$) and engagement (Standard Beta = 0.72 $p = 0.0001$) when socio-economic disadvantage is present.

As a result of the above findings, the need to have leadership development programs that enhance the use of transformational practices arises. When implemented, proposals that intend to prepare school leaders to be effective communicators and to support the creation of collaborative schools should prove fruitful. According to Day et al. (2020), such programs also improve individual leaders' effectiveness, as well as the systems of schooling more generally. These arguments are further substantiated in this study through proving that transformational leadership positively impacts on critical student outcomes, especially where it is targeted as the content of professional development efforts.

Conclusion

The current research focuses on school leadership by proposing a more specific theory, transformational leadership which has not been well explored in prior research with regard to its impact on students' attendance and engagement. The results themselves were all positive, suggesting substantial positive correlations and predictive, meaningful links between leadership practices and motivational, inclusionary, and supportive climates. In this analysis, the type of leadership that differentiated overall behavioral, emotional, and cognitive student activation as well as daily attendance was transformational leadership. These findings underscore the importation of leadership development solicitous on thoughtful transformational practice, and present realistic suggestions for educational policy and school administration. Moreover, the cross-context nature of this study adds to the literature on leadership's activities in less school contexts for narrowing achievement gaps and enhancing learner achievement. It is therefore recommended that future studies should use longitudinal designs and intervention studies in order to corroborate these results and extend them.

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