



Contribution of School Leaders' Practices to Students' Academic Performance in Selected Nine-Year Basic Education (9YBE) Schools in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the contribution of school leaders' practices to students' academic achievement in nine-year basic education (9YBE) Schools. Specifically, the study sought to identify some practices school leaders used to enhance their student's academic performance in the 9YBE schools, to assess how these school leaders' practices contribute to their student's academic performance, and finally to find out the main challenges faced by different school leaders in enhancing their students' academic performance in the nine years basic education (9YBE) schools and to recommend areas for improvement in the future. Key theories include instructional leadership, which focuses on promoting teaching and learning, and transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating teachers and staff towards a shared vision. This study was conducted using a descriptive survey design. The target audience included two (2) 9YBE schools, one sector education officer, 25 teachers, and 307 students aware of the impact of school leaders' practices on their students' academic achievement. The purposive sampling technique was utilized to choose a sample of twenty (20) instructors, two (2) school leaders, one sector education officer (SEO), and 30 pupils. Data was collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions with teachers and students, and an interview schedule for school administrators and SEO. The researcher used the pilot study to establish the reliability of the instruments, and the supervisor discovered the validity. The investigation produced results that necessitated both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative data was presented narratively, while the quantitative data was evaluated using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings were presented using figures and tables. The survey's findings revealed that numerous techniques employed by school leaders to improve their students' academic performance formed a clear vision of academic achievement, as reported by 61.11% of teachers and 51.17% of students who participated in the study. Furthermore, school leaders may employ additional strategies to improve their students' academic achievement, such as creating a welcoming environment, encouraging leadership in others, and improving education. The findings demonstrate the impact of school leaders' practices on students' academic performance, as reported by respondent students (96.55%) and instructors (100%). This study uncovers many issues experienced by many school leaders, including poor English language proficiency among teachers and students, a terrible living environment for teachers, low teacher salaries, overloaded instructors, and poor time management for teachers and students. This study indicated that school leaders' practices can favorably impact their students' academic success. This study suggests that the Ministry of Education, through the National Examination and School Inspection Authority, develop appropriate monitoring and assessment methods for school leaders' practices to improve Rwandan students' academic performance in nine-year basic education (9YBE) schools. Furthermore, school administrators, teachers, and students should make coordinated efforts to develop their English language as a medium of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Nine Years Basic Education, School Leader, Students' Academic Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Education reforms in many countries have resulted in substantial changes in the roles of school leaders. School leadership is vested in the senior staff in schools, and especially the school leader is regarded by policy-makers and practitioners alike as a key factor in ensuring a school's performance through the patronage of their good students' academic performance. Taylor (2006) has estimated that 80% of schools are not functioning effectively in the national examination due to their poor school leadership. Hence, school leaders are expected to guide all employees and students, support them, undertake all responsibilities, and inspire them to meet the objectives of the school. As a result



of Taylor's (2006) research, the school leadership is an important element of effective management in successful schools. However, many education systems have been hit by poor students' academic performance, which is announced every year with the national examination results, because some schools have maintained good academic performance, while others have always lagged. Regarding these schools' achievements in Rwanda, I have found two categories of schools known as boarding schools and day schools (which are known as 9&12 YBE schools). Depending on the type of school leadership selected by her/his school leader, each school had a different way of realizing its objectives.

Hallinger (2000) explained that the school leaders' function in a school is very complex because it contains 'the managerial, political, instructional, human resource, and symbolic leadership roles in their schools. However, some of these schools achieved better than others due to their leadership practices within the school. In the same way, schools in the first category seemed to produce outstanding results in the national examination results (with 90-100% pass rate) while others performed poorly or below average (50% -60%). It means that schools do not become great because of magnificent buildings, but because of magnificent school leaders, and the school's performance is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it. In addition to this statement above, school leadership is one of many factors that contribute to students' academic performance, among other factors like qualified teachers, high scores, the school environment, and government education policies (Ministry of Education [MINEDUC], 2003). Kyla and Karen (2010) explained that a school leader must be the one who sets the conditions and expectations for excellent instruction and building a culture of good students' academic performance. So, the quality of the education system depends on the nature of leadership provided by school leaders who must be able to control, direct, and guide teachers and students. It means that the school leadership system provides direction and clear channels of communication for optimal interaction between the school and its environment.

According to Ayot and Briggs (1992), some poor students' academic performance in education is related to poor school leadership in any school. So, school leadership is one of the other factors that contribute on students' academic performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). It means that the success or failure of a school is usually attributed to the school leader who led it. The practices of school leaders are some important elements of effective management in successful schools. Based on the study of Jean Paul Rousseau in the 18th century, a leader is someone who positively inspires others in their ideas and actions towards an honourable goal. It is the reason why the absence of proper management and leadership at school contributes to poor students' academic performance in the national examinations. She or he is the first person in charge of the good governance of all school activities, and she or he is also in charge of the school's human resource management (MINEDUC, 2003).

Hence, school leadership is central development of any education system. Contrarily, the philosophy of school leadership is a relatively new concept in enhancing students' academic performance. It has emerged that school leaders are managers or administrators of all school activities related to the many policies of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2003) through the Rwanda Education Board. Here, school leaders regarded themselves as managers of the school, responsible for budgeting, developing and approving timetables, maintaining buildings, organizing and chairing parents' meetings. In the same way, school leaders' skills could influence the behaviour of the school in terms of how teachers teach, how students learn, and the overall school performance (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). It is the reason why school leadership is central development of any education system.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem regarding the contribution of school leaders' practices to students' academic performance in the selected Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools in Rwanda likely focuses on how leadership strategies, decision-making, and management styles impact student outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of effective curriculum implementation and the challenges faced in enhancing academic performance within these schools, as highlighted by findings on performance issues in various districts. The government of Rwanda introduced major reforms in the education sector to improve access, participation, and performance of students in the education system. As a result of that, the government of Rwanda established the nine-year basic education (9YBE) schools in 2009 for free and compulsory to all Rwandan children, but since then, these schools have been blamed by the community for the poor academic performance. Even if these nine and twelve-year basic education(12YBE) schools in Rwanda are looking like a government program related to the three Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, and promote gender equality (MINEDUC, 2018).

Some politicians, stakeholders, and policymakers have expressed concern that many students from these schools were not performing well academically across school curriculum areas, as demonstrated by the examination results of 2014- 2017 in the Gasabo District. Again, this similar view has been expressed mainly in the day schools (known as 9&12 YBE schools), whereas these schools are expected to prepare all the Rwandan students to increase access and participation of students required to build skilled human capital in our country. However, many students' academic performance in these schools remained very poor in their national examination results, as shown by the



Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) campaign of 2018. So, this view of poor students' academic performance remains habitual even if all school leaders and some teaching staff were qualified to teach, but they didn't spend much time at school. Referring to this problem above, a researcher tried to emphasize on the contribution of school leaders' practice on students' academic performance because many studies have been undertaken by focusing on different causes of poor students' academic performance in the secondary schools, but no one who tried to investigate or demonstrate how school leaders' practice can affect directly or indirectly their students' academic performance.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- i. To identify some practices of school leaders used to enhance their students' academic performance in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools,
- ii. To assess how these school leaders' practices contribute to their students' academic performance in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools
- iii. To find out the main challenges faced by different school leaders in enhancing their students' academic performance.

1.3 Research Questions

To operationalize the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

- i. What are school leaders' different practices to enhance their students' academic performance in the nine-year basic education schools?
- ii. How do these school leaders' practices contribute to their students' academic performance in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools?
- iii. What are the main challenges faced by different school leaders in enhancing their students' academic performance in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Theoretical frameworks of school leaders' practices often center around various leadership theories that help in understanding and analyzing how principals lead schools. Key theories include instructional leadership, which focuses on promoting teaching and learning, and transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating teachers and staff towards a shared vision.

2.1.1 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a leadership approach focused on supporting the development of teaching and learning within educational settings. This type of leadership encompasses defining shared educational expectations, strategically managing resources, and overseeing the instructional program to improve student outcomes. It is recognized that continuous improvement in instructional leadership skills is vital for school leaders (Goddard et al, 2015). Instructional leadership is leadership that supports the development of teaching and learning. It is referred to using different names, including pedagogical leadership, learning-centered leadership, leadership for learning, and student-centered leadership. Goddard et al (2015) identified four key levers of instructional leadership at the district that drive successful and sustainable school transformation. The levers are: system leadership, support and accountability, talent management, and instructional infrastructure. For this study, Instructional leadership significantly influences students' academic performance in Rwanda's Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools. Effective school leaders implement curricula effectively, which is crucial for improving academic outcomes. They also address the challenges that arise in the educational environment and enhance collaboration among teachers and other stakeholders to ensure a quality educational experience for students. This focus on leadership practices positively correlates with better student academic competence and performance.

2.1.2 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style where leaders inspire and motivate their followers to innovate and excel. This approach encourages intellectual stimulation, personal growth, and a focus on achieving goals that benefit both individuals and the organization. Leaders using this style aim to create a supportive environment that promotes team development and fosters enthusiasm toward the organization's vision (Bass et al., 1996). Transformational leadership is a leadership style characterized by leaders who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate their followers. This approach emphasizes encouraging follower growth, fostering innovation, and developing a shared vision that aligns with the goals of both the individuals and the organization. Leaders using



this style focus on creating a positive work environment and supporting followers in their personal and professional development. Transformational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of school leaders inspiring and motivating their teachers and students to achieve higher academic performance. In the context of the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools in Rwanda, effective leadership practices rooted in this theory have been shown to contribute positively to students' academic performances. For instance, studies have indicated that aligned leadership practices enhance educational outcomes by fostering an environment of accountability and continuous improvement.

Additionally, frameworks concerning organizational change, such as continuous improvement, also provide insights into the dynamics of school leadership. These frameworks enable school leaders to navigate challenges and implement effective practices that enhance educational outcomes. The theoretical framework for understanding the contribution of school leaders' practices to students' academic performance in the selected Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools in Rwanda can be based on several key components. Firstly, effective school leadership is critical in establishing a positive school culture that fosters learning and achievement. This includes setting high expectations, facilitating professional development, and promoting parental and community involvement, which have all been shown to enhance student outcomes. Additionally, the 9YBE program aims to increase enrollment and improve the quality of education, suggesting that leadership practices directly influence the implementation and success of educational policies (Harerimana & Adegoke, 2017).

Moreover, the relationship between school leaders' decision-making and support for teachers significantly impacts teaching quality, which in turn affects student performance. Barriers such as resource limitations and administrative challenges also need to be considered, as highlighted in studies focused on the challenges faced by schools in Rwanda.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 School Leaders' Practices to Enhance Students' Academic Performance

The contribution of school leaders in the school management system is exercised through the actions or tasks assigned to accomplish functions for the organization (Nichols, 2011). The head-teacher, as a school leader, is expected to support teachers to move in a positive direction to ensure that students' learning is focused on the quality of education. In an effective school, school leaders set different goals, leading it and motivating their subordinates to perform better in it. Hence, school leaders are committed to the improvement of students' academic performance when she or he establish a clear learning objective for each class level and each subject. That is why school leaders are expected to be the key players in contributing to their students' academic performance at their school and at the national level.

In the same topic, various studies in Kenya have shown that poor students' academic performance in secondary school is a function of poor administrative practices by the head of the school (Githua & Nyabwa, 2007). The head of schools, as school leaders, play a significant role in determining the academic performance and the quality of education in particular schools due to their assigned tasks and their roles in the day-to-day interactions with school members. Given that, the subject of school leadership in contributing to the provision of students' academic performance about the quality of education has received considerable attention from the public as well as educational stakeholders. Managers and leaders must be able to develop and implement a cyclical process involving seven managerial functions, such as goal setting, needs identification, priority setting, planning, budgeting, implementing, and evaluating (Caldwell, 1992). School leaders apply many influences, either directly, through face-to-face contact and communication, or indirectly by creating relevant conditions and organizational culture across their school.

In this similar views, the effective school leaders have different activities such as: defining a clear vision of their school, managing the school curriculum, supervising teaching and learning, monitoring learner progress, and cultivating a school climate which influence others people in their school and local community because she or he thinks and acts differently when progressing important shared tasks for educational purpose. It's the reason why considerable evidence indicates that school leaders can make important contributions to the success of their students.

So, the school leader is the central figure when the school is considered a formal organization. The significant properties of key decisions made at the schools are made with the agreement of school leaders (Charles et al., 2012). His position in the school provides him with an opportunity to motivate his staff and to improve the standards of academic performance in the school. They had the role of creating a good atmosphere in the school setting, to make sure that teachers are teaching and students are learning, to ensure that the mission and vision of the Ministry of Education are achieved. They are greatly accountable for the academic achievements of their students.

In addition to that, the school leaders are expected to be the key players in contributing to the provision of students' academic performance in their schools and at the national level. Schools' organizational management has a great influence on students' academic performance in their schools (Leithwood et al., 2010). Subsequently, effective school leaders usually concentrate on planning, coordinating, and facilitating the work without neglecting interpersonal relationships with the staff, support staff, and the student body.



According to Cotton (2003), school leaders must work on the different learning objectives at schools such as: establishing a school goals, provide motivation to the teachers and students, support teachers and their students with the needed instructional resources, communicate high performance expectation to them, implement different policies and procedures by which to promote teaching and learning at their schools. They initiate change to reach existing and new goals.

2.2.2 School Leaders' Practices Contribution to Students' Academic Performance

According to Leithwood and Reihl (2003), the school leader has different contributions like to: create a vision of school and establish its directions, understand and develop people, create cultures and processes based on their school leadership's cooperation to administer her or his environment and the working conditions, creating the productive work conditions for both staffs and students. She/he has a great task of encouraging individual to live up to their potential and always emphasizes how the team differs from others.

As a result, the school leader's role is to provide leadership, direction, and coordination within the school. School leaders perform, among other key functions, shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Karen & Kenneth, 2004). Consequently, the role of the school leader is the most significant in enhancing school performance through students' academic performance. Hence, the school management system provides direction and clear communication channels for optimal interaction in the school. It's because a leadership matter helps to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty in any organization or society.

In promoting student success and the well-being of each student, the educational leader acts ethically. Management of many organizations is defined as a distinct process consisting of activities of planning, organizing, activating, and controlling performance of their stated objectives with the use of human beings and other resources (Franklin, 2002). Thus, the role of a school leader can be defined in terms of various functions performed by him in every situation, like to coordinating the work of the teachers, helping develop and implement their curricula, mediating communication between teachers, parents, and pupils, and organizing various school events, including extra-curricular activities. It's because good leaders do not simply administer organizational structures and tasks, but first of all concentrate on the people carrying out these functions.

In the school setting, the school principal as leader of school is guiding schools to better teaching and learning through the shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction and managing people, data and process (as quoted by Dewey Hensley in 2009 and <http://www.Wallacefoundation.org>). they also have great tasks of encouraging individual to live up to their potential and always emphasize how the team differs from others. On the other hand, in effective school management, school leaders set many different school goals, leading it and monitoring students and teachers to perform to their highest potential.

According to Neil et al (2001), school leaders handled more administrative and management tasks before, but now there is a greater need to focus on the implementation of leadership qualities. Thus, the Head-teacher of a school is the leader of a school who directs, administers, and manages human and material resources, as well as performs other administrative tasks and represents the authority role within a school. She or he develops the professional capacity and practice of school personnel. For that reason, the roles of school leaders will be focused on the common goals and learning objectives to create and maintain effective schools.

In this regard, a school leader as manager of the school has a lot of roles to play in the academic achievement of their students. Due to the increasing diversity and complexity of their work, school leaders need more interpersonal skills for communication, collaboration, negotiation, and conflict management. She or he establishes interpersonal relations with members, inspires them, guides them, and helps them to march in the given direction of their schools, and also it is needed to create a unique approach of leadership in the school context. It is the way and the process of how one can achieve their target or goals, as we consider very well in the arts and sciences

According to Nichols (2011), a school leader is the person who plans and maintains program development, allocates resources, improves the performance of employees and students by encouraging them, and guides them to meet the different school objectives. School administration can influence different schools through school leadership, environment, stakeholder relationships, extra-curricular activities, and finding qualified teachers. School leaders can supervise the instruction delivery, motivate teachers, effectively provide teaching or learning resources, and provide opportunities for parents to participate in school activities. Political and socio-economic factors can also influence the school leaders' contribution to the students' academic performance. It is always thought about the schools' ability to deliver high-quality education, which is generally dependent to a very large extent on their leadership quality.

2.2.3 Challenges Faced by different School Leaders in enhancing Students' Academic Performance

The school leader's efforts to improve students' academic performance are not an easy task. It may be hindered by several factors that the school leader needs to wrestle with. Many secondary schools in Namibia are characterized by the poor students' academic performance in grade 12 due to high absenteeism of teachers and learners, late coming, irregular attendance of classes and the absence of teaching and learning culture in different public schools (Mushaandja, 2006) while the study of Namwandi (2014) explained that the high failure rate in Kenyan secondary schools are attributed to a lack of school leadership training skills, the poor quality of teacher, a lack of commitment by teachers to their works, a lack of discipline amongst teachers and students, the absenteeism of teachers and students, and the lack of accountability of stakeholders in education.

In the Rwandan school setting, like other countries worldwide, school leaders set different goals, leading and motivating their subordinates to perform better it. It means that a school leader is committed to the improvement of students' academic performance when she or he establishes clear or specific learning objectives for each class level and each subject taught at school. However, there are many challenges inhibiting their ability to improve their students' academic performance, as cited by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2018). They found that the main challenges are poor capacity of using the English language, working and living environment of teachers, lower salary of teachers, poor time management, absenteeism and lateness of many teachers, and the overload of many teachers. Consequently, we have discussed these challenges below in detail.

As observed about the poor capacity of using the English language is a challenge for academic performance; many students enter the Nine Years Basic Education(9YBE) school without passing any subject in their national examination result (meaning they are unclassified with "U" grade), and also are not fluent in using the English language as a language of instruction (MINEDUC, 2018). The English language is used for testing students' mastery of subject content and is also used in the national examinations. However, many students might understand their concepts in our mother language (Kinyarwanda), but they fail to express themselves in the language of the examination. For that reason, it is possible to see communication as a variable challenge that may positively affect the students' academic performance.

This view of that problem is more common in primary and ordinary level secondary schools, where a lot of school leaders and many teachers are not fluent in the English language. Even if the government of Rwanda has aimed to ensure that all children in Rwanda can access and complete the full cycle of Nine Years Basic Education(9YBE) school for free but the remaining problem is the poor quality of education in these schools (Tabaro, 2019). Consequently, it is one of the challenges that inhibits the role of school leaders in improving students' academic performance at school.

The working and living environment of teachers is considered a challenge to student academic performance. According to the findings of Chemisto (2007) in Kenya, there are not enough staff houses to accommodate all the teachers in the compound at their schools. This lack of staff housing to accommodate is very common in developing countries like Rwanda. As a result of that, the work and living environment of primary and secondary teachers is poor and tends to lower self-esteem. It generally demotivates many of them. This lack of motivation can affect many teachers' activities, such as their lesson plan and scheme of work preparation, because many of them come from far away. It has also been attributed to the students' low academic performance because many teachers are not able to use their extra time for lesson planning and schemes of work preparation due to the long distance between school and their homes.

The challenge about the lower salary of teachers, Hansun (1986) confirmed that many teachers had more than one job due to their low salary scales set by their bosses. The lower salary of teachers has forced a large proportion of them to find other secondary income generation from private tutoring through student coaching and other activities in the community. This problem is most frequent in the many primary and secondary schools where a lot of school leaders do not spend much time at school, while they have a role in improving the academic advancement of their students by using their managerial role. It may be affecting their students' academic performance in many schools because some of them have taken their ordinary working time to use it in their second job to get more income.

The challenge about the overload of many teachers, the study conducted by Dazvo et al (2024) in Rwanda, observed that teachers are said to spend long hours at work teaching because of an overloaded timetable. That affects preparation for classes and negatively impacts student interaction. Teachers are required to teach eight hours a day, that is 40 hours a week, and complain about not having time for other classroom-related activities such as lesson planning, marking, and reporting, among others. Insufficient time allocation for completing learning tasks leads students to feel overworked, increasing their tendency to abandon deep learning and encouraging surface learning approaches.

In other ways, the study of Chemisto in 2007, he found that in Kenya, most schools had underperformance in some subjects, especially humanities, Kiswahili, and business studies, leading to poor syllabus coverage. It is the same as our country, where some teachers are forced to teach subjects in which they are never trained due to the completion



of the required working hours in secondary school, large class sizes, and more subjects per teacher. This problem is the most frequent in the many primary and secondary schools where there is a gap of qualified teachers and a lack of different classrooms.

Poor time management among teachers and their students is a major problem in countries worldwide. In the realities, it's the same as our country, based on the different study conducted by Ministry of education in 2018, they found that many teachers are arriving late, finishing early and leaving their classes during the working hours due to different reason such as: illness, family problem, follow up of the right at the district officer due to their discipline case in the community, claiming of promotion and other rights. This can seriously reduce the total instructional time. It seems that when the instructional time is reduced, the school performance and students' academic performance are also reduced.

The challenge faced by Rwandan Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools is based on absenteeism and lateness of many teachers. According to the World Bank (1990), teacher absenteeism and lateness are other challenges inhibiting the role of school leaders in the school management system. It's because many poor motivations and lack of accountability of different teachers are coming from to high level of their absenteeism. However, in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE), it is very difficult to measure teachers' absenteeism because they are not motivated in the same ways as other teachers who have taught the same lesson in the boarding schools. This can affect students' academic performance due to the lack of much syllabus coverage.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy for the Contribution of school leaders' practices on the students' academic performance is the belief that effective school leadership contributes to the academic performance of students. School leaders are responsible for academic performance and school success in general. Considering the nature of this research focuses on how leadership practices should influence students' academic performance, especially in the Rwandan context of 9YBE schools, a pragmatic approach could be the most suitable. It allows for a comprehensive exploration of the practical effect of school leadership on student success in the Rwandan education system.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

This study was conducted using a descriptive survey design whereby a mixed approach was used to collect and analyze data through the questionnaire, interviews, and group discussions. This was appropriate for this research to investigate the contribution of school leaders' practices to students' academic performance in the nine-year basic education schools. The dependent variable was students' academic performance, whereas the independent variable was the school leaders' practices.

3.3 Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools in the Kinyinya sector in Gasabo District. The population was the students, teachers, and school leaders at the school level. The sector of study had a total of three secondary schools. The respondents included the senior three (S3) students from the selected secondary schools in this sector, teachers, head-teachers, and the sector education officer. This study used a total of fifty-three (53) respondents.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The selection of a sample from the target population, aimed at achieving greater accuracy and efficiency compared to considering the entire population, as explained by Ndagijimana et al. (2024). The purposive sampling technique was used to select sample of twenty (20) teachers, two (2) school leaders and one sector education officer (SEO) who were working in Kinyinya sector due to their managerial position and also a simple random sampling technique was used to select thirty (30) students out of 307. This study used a total of fifty-three (53) respondents.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Ndagijimana et al. (2025) highlight using questionnaires, interviews, and observation forms as data collection instruments in education and social sciences. The data collection instruments have been developed to reflect the research purpose and objectives to find out how school leaders' practices contributed to their students' academic performance, as it was ranked from 2020 to 2024. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means, and percentages, and means will be generated and presented in pie charts, frequency tables, and bar graphs. Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The responses were grouped and presented thematically according to the objectives of the study.



3.6 Ethical Consideration

According to Ndagijimana et al (2025), before data collection, the authors sought approval from the schools investigated. At school, before data collection, participants were informed about the study's purpose. All participants were given a consent form to sign and participated voluntarily in the study. Confidentiality and privacy standards were upheld throughout the process of data collection. In this study, there's no conflict of interest.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Practices of School Leaders Used to Enhance their Students' Academic Performance in the Nine-Year Basic Education Schools (9YBE)

According to Harvey & Holland (2013), the school leader is guiding schools to better teaching and learning through the shaping a clear vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data and process to improve their students' academic performance. So, this section analyses and interprets findings from the data collected through the questionnaire submitted to the respondents on the different practices of school leaders, which is accepted as a key practice to improve school effectiveness and students' academic performance. Therefore, teachers' and students' responses were presented and discussed below based on those key practices of effective school leaders.

Respondents' views on the shaping of a vision of academic success as a practice of school leaders: In this view, teachers and students were asked to give their ideas regarding the shaping of a clear vision of academic success for all students.

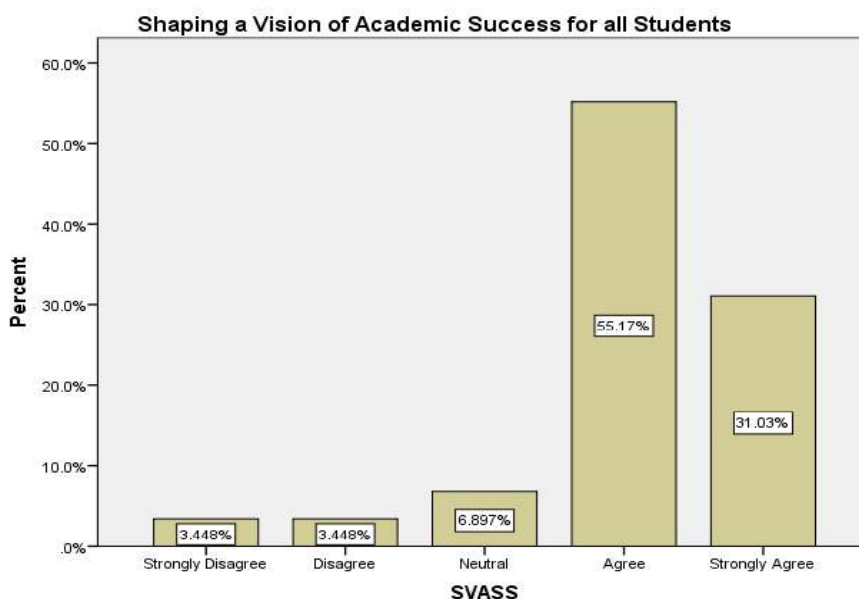


Figure 1
Teachers' Responses about Shaping a Vision of Academic Success

In the statement above, the practices of school leaders are accepted as a key to improving school effectiveness and students' academic performance. This study revealed that the practices of school leaders in enhancing their students' academic performance included shaping a clear vision of academic success for all the students, as indicated by 61.11% of teachers who responded, and 51.17% of students agreed on it in this study, as indicated by Figure 1 above.

Respondents' views on the creation of a climate hospitable to education as a practice of school leader: According to Charles et al (2012), the school leader is the person who plans and maintains program development, allocates resources, improves the performance of employees and students by encouraging them, and guides them to meet the objectives of the schools. So, school leaders established interpersonal relations with members, inspired them, guided them, and helped them to march in the given direction of their schools. In the interpretation of the above statement, Figure 2 below represents the findings from teachers' and students' questionnaires on that item.

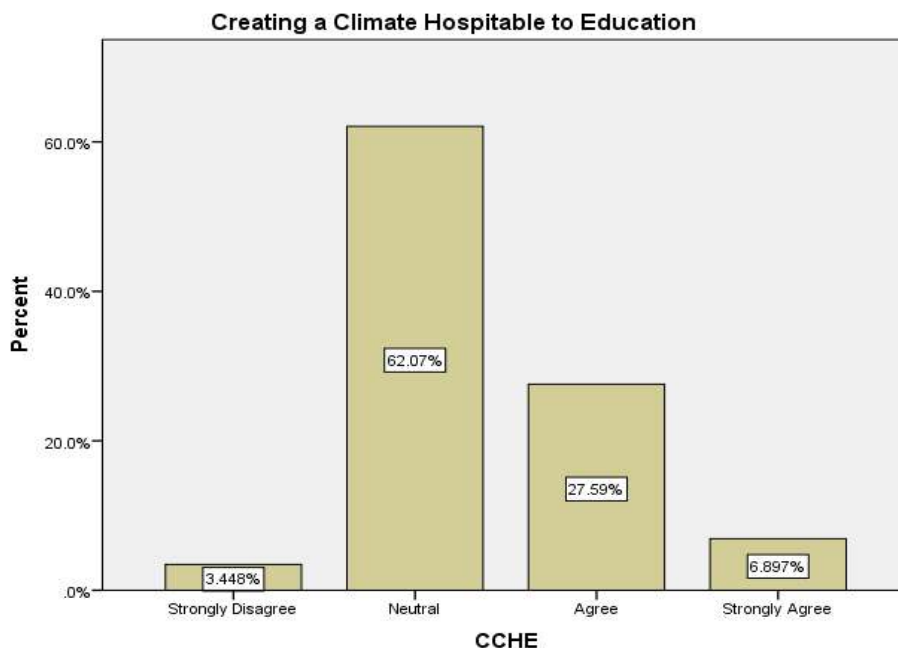


Figure 2
Students’ Responses about the Creation of a Climate Hospitable to Education

This study found that 55.56% of teachers and 27.59% of the students also confirmed that proper creation of a climate hospitable to education constitutes the practices of school leaders in enhancing their students’ academic performance, as indicated by Figure 2 above.

Respondents’ views on cultivating leadership in others as a practice of school leaders: It is the school leader who sets the pace, leading it and motivating students and staff to perform better to their highest potential. Sushila (2004) explained that the school leader is the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail carried out in school, such as academic or administrative activities.

In the interpretation of the above statement, Figures 3 below represent the findings from teachers’ and students’ questionnaires on that item.

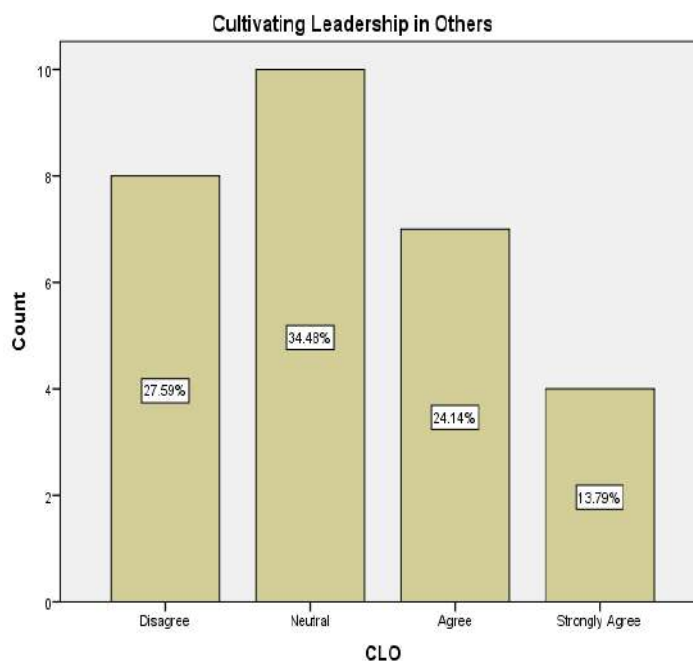


Figure 3
Teachers’ Responses about the Cultivation of Leadership in Others

The study discovered that 66.67% of teachers and 24.14% of students confirmed that cultivating leadership in others could be one of the school leaders’ practices used to enhance their students’ academic performance.

Respondents’ views on improving instruction as a practice of school leaders: According to MINEDUC (2003), it presented that school leadership is central development of any education system because school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. The findings from teachers and students on improving instruction as a key practice of school leaders are presented below in Figures 4 and 5

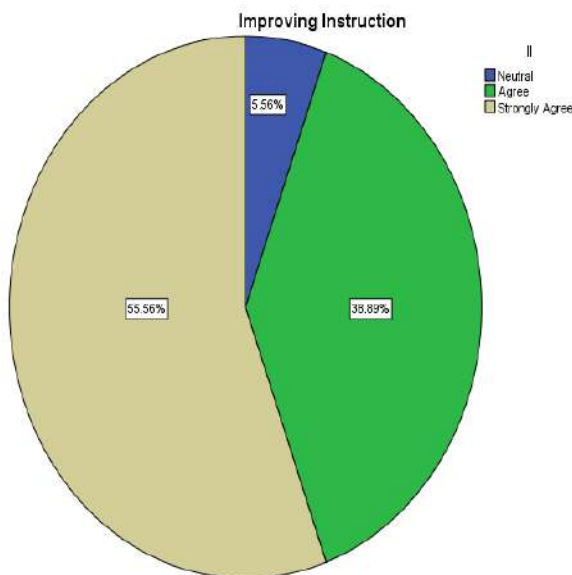


Figure 4
Teachers’ Responses about the Improvement

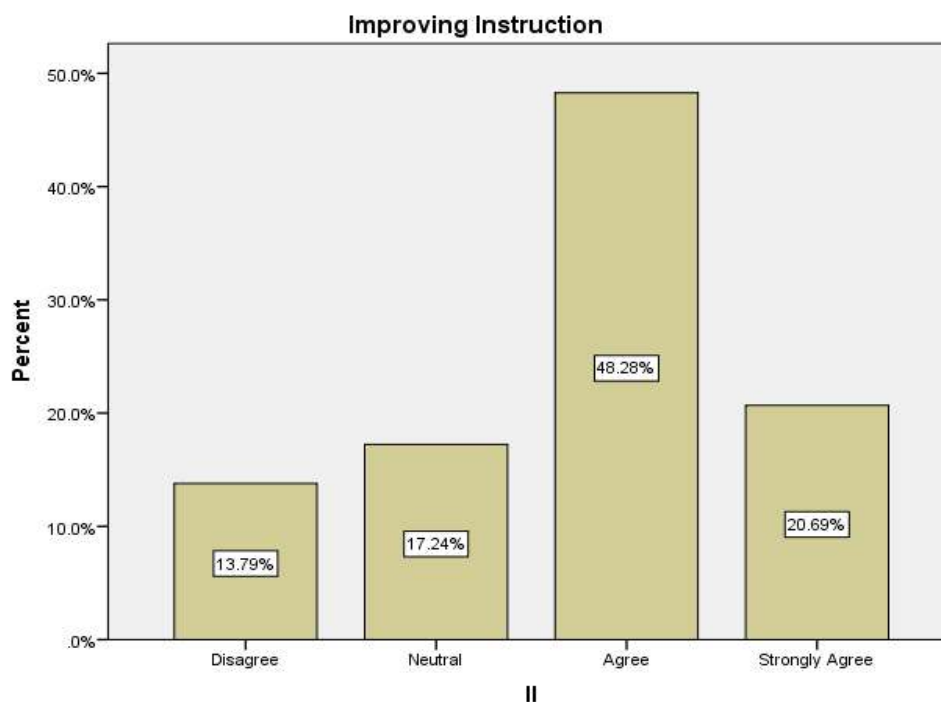


Figure 5
Students’ Responses about the Improvement of School Instruction of School Instruction

The respondents articulated that the improvement of some educational instruction could be one of the practices of school leaders used in enhancing their students’ academic performance, as indicated by Figures 4 and 5 above.

The school leaders’ practices contribute to their students’ academic performance: According to Neil et al. (2001), the contribution of school leaders is exercised through the actions or tasks assigned to accomplish functions for their organization. Therefore, school leaders set different goals, lead, and motivate their subordinates to perform better for them. The findings from teachers and students on the impact of the school leaders’ practices on their students’ academic performance are presented below in Figure 6.

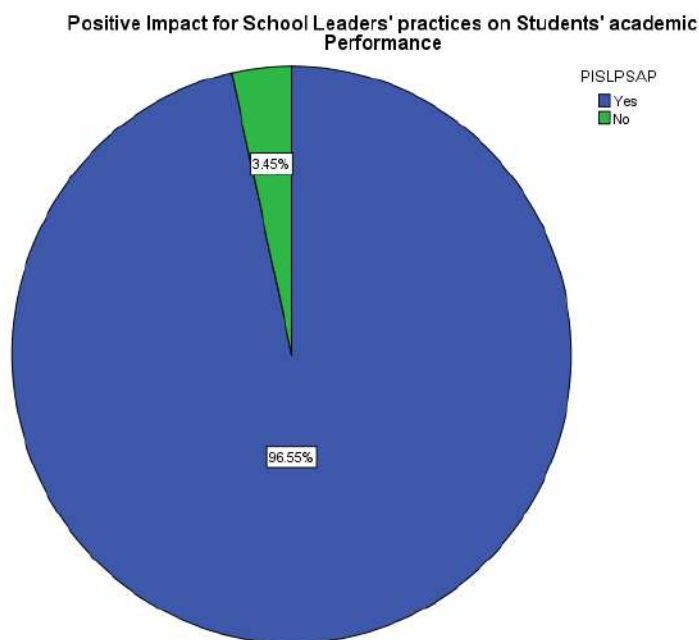


Figure 6
Students’ Response about the Impact of the School Leaders’ Practices on their Students’ Academic Performance

The findings of this study revealed that school leaders’ practices have a positive impact on the students’ academic performance as 96.55% of the students agree that there is a positive impact of school leaders’ practices on students’ academic performance and 100% of teachers who were asked also agree that there is a positive impact of school leaders’ practices on students’ academic performance where all teachers’ response were yes which means that 100% confirmed this statement. The findings of this study were also in agreement with the study of Leith (1997), where he showed that the school and its organizational management correlate with the academic performance of its students. So, the school leaders are committed to improving students’ academic performance when she or he establish a clear learning objective for each class level and each subject.

4.3 The main Challenges Faced by Different School Leaders in enhancing their Students’ Academic Performance

In the report of Belgian development organization specialized in increasing the quality of education (VVOB, 2016), it was mentioned that the main challenges faced by school leaders in enhancing students’ academic performance include: the poor capacity of using English language, working and living environment of teachers, low salary of teachers, poor time managements, absenteeism and lateness of many teachers and students, and the overloaded of many teachers. Therefore, teachers' and students’ responses were presented and discussed below based on the objective of the study.

Respondents’ views on the poor capacity of using the English language for teachers and their students: All school leaders mentioned that the English language become challenge in accomplishing their duty because most students did not understand English language and also lack a foundation of this language from primary school due to studying all subjects in Kinyarwanda language. In the interpretation of the above, poor capacity for using the English language for teachers and their students has been suggested.

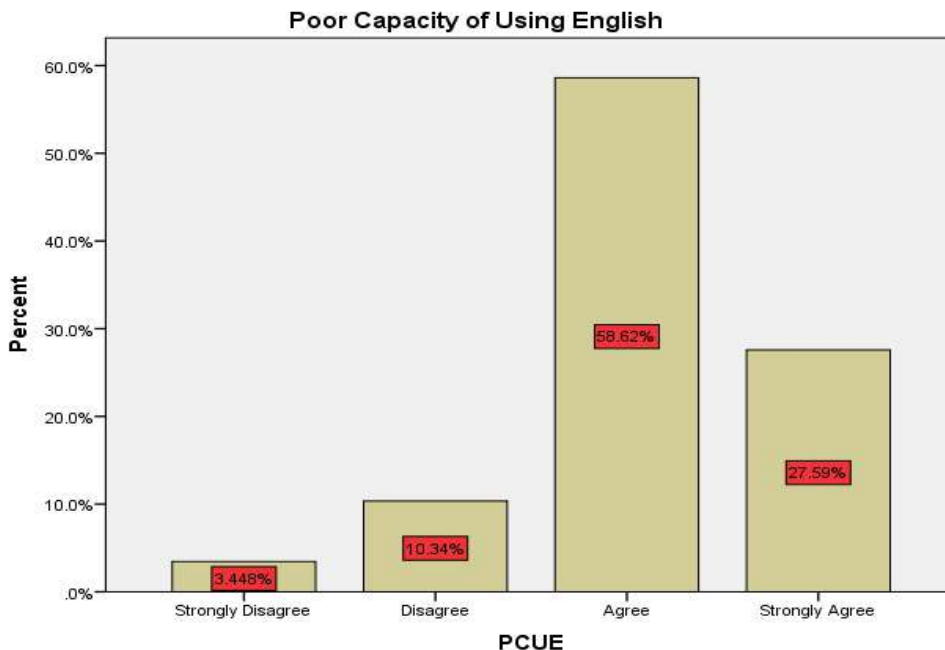


Figure 7
Teachers’ Responses about the Capacity of Using the English Language

This study indicated that the poor capacity of using the English language for both students and teachers is our main challenge faced by school leaders in enhancing students’ academic performance, as indicated by 61.11 % of teachers and 58.62 % of the students who were sampled.

Respondents’ views on the working and living environment of teachers: In these Rwandan Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE) schools, the living and working environment of many teachers are found as a critical problem due to the scarcity of some resources at their schools and also many respondents suggested the different ways of managing those problem as to inform the high authority about the absence of those particular resources. In the interpretation of the above, the work and living environment of the teachers has been suggested as a main challenge, and the respondents’ views are presented in Figure 8 below.

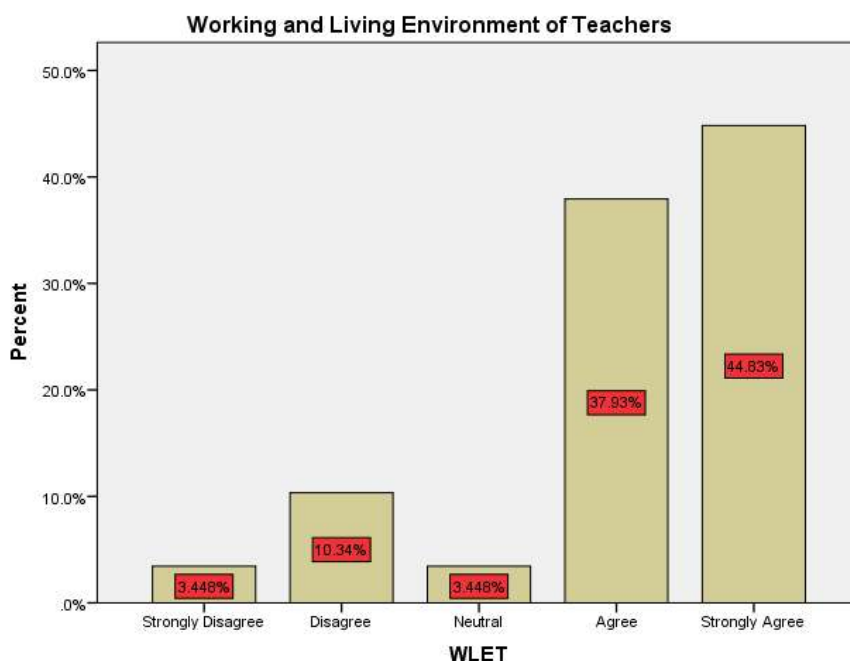


Figure 8
Teachers’ Responses about the Living Environment of Teachers



The poor living environment of many teachers is another challenge to school leaders’ practices, which was confirmed by 77.78 % of the teachers and 44.83 % of the students who strongly agreed with this statement.

Respondents’ views on the absenteeism and lateness of teachers and their students: Many researchers showed that attendance and academic performance were powerful variables contributing to academic performance. So, absenteeism and lateness could affect many aspects of a school’s program as well as the individual student’s academic performance. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) noted that the excessive absenteeism during the period of study was an important forecaster of high school dropout rate. So, class attendance is vital to following in school and is considered an important aspect of student access to education. In the interpretation of the above, absenteeism and lateness of teachers and their students have been suggested as a main challenge faced by different school leaders in enhancing their students’ academic performance, and the respondents’ views are presented in Figures 9 and 10 below.

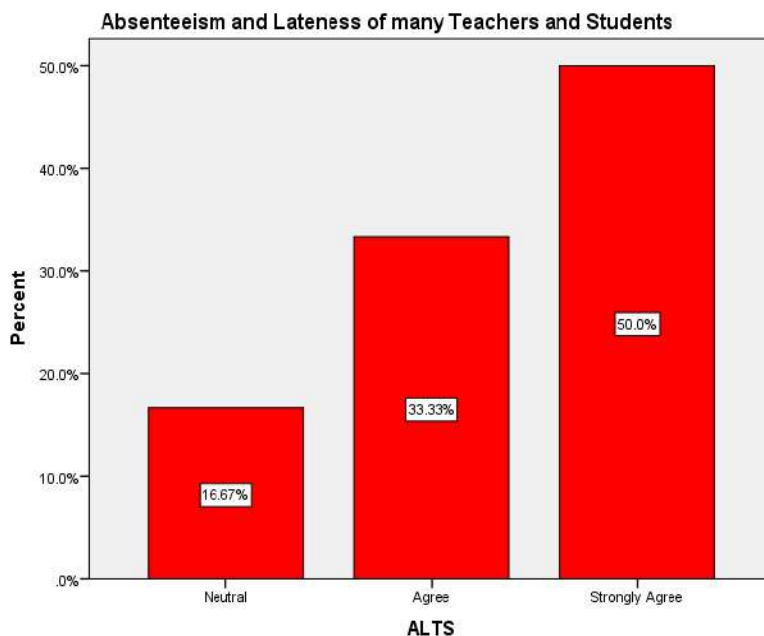


Figure 9
Teachers’ Responses about Absenteeism and Lateness of Their Students

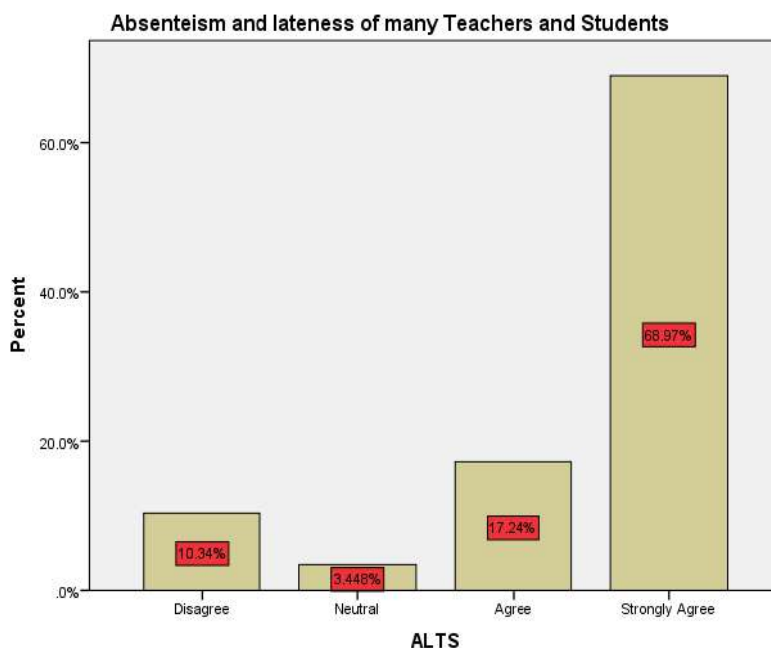


Figure 10
Students’ Responses about the Absenteeism and Lateness of their Teachers

According to figures 9 and 10 above, it is obvious that absenteeism and lateness of teachers and their students make one of the main challenges faced by different school leaders in enhancing their students’ academic performance, as it is strongly agreed by 50.0% of the teachers and 68.97% of the students. Another challenge is the poor time



management of teachers, which was confirmed by 56.65 % of teachers and 62.07% of the students who strongly agreed with this statement above. However, insufficient funds, overloaded teachers, low salaries of teachers, lack of teaching consumables, lack of enough laboratories, offices, classrooms, and hostels for teachers were also found as challenges.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The summary of the research findings was focused on the purpose of this study with their specific objectives like identifying the different practices of school leaders used to enhance their students' academic performance in the nine years basic education schools of Kinyinya sector, assessing how these school leaders' practices contribute on students' academic performance in the nine years basic education schools of Kinyinya sector, and finding out the main challenges face. As a result, by the study's objectives, comments from teachers and students will be presented and summarized below. According to the study's findings, school leaders' practices for improving their students' academic performance primarily include shaping a clear vision of academic success for all students, creating an educational climate, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data, and processes. The study also concluded that school leaders' practices contribute positively to their students' academic performance. Finally, based on the study's findings, it is possible to conclude that different school leaders face numerous challenges in improving their students' academic performance, such as poor English language proficiency, poor time management, absenteeism and lateness, and a poor working and living environment for many teachers.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the objectives and findings of the study, the following suggestions have been made: The Ministry of Education, through the National Examination and School Inspection Authority, shall provide appropriate monitoring and assessment techniques for school leaders' practices, as well as provide various English and leadership training's for teachers and School leaders. School Academic Leaders, teachers, and students should make a great effort to improve their English language use because it is the medium of instruction.

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