

Leadership Style and Pupil Behaviour: A Comparative Study of Male and Female Headteachers in Ghanaian Basic Schools

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Abstract:

This study advances debates in educational leadership by examining how gendered leadership practices shape pupil behaviour within under-researched African school contexts. The study examined the leadership styles (LS) of male and female headteachers (MFH) and their impact on pupils' behaviour (PB) in Ghanaian basic schools (GBS). Research objectives include: determine the specific LS employed by the MFH in GBS; evaluate the impact of gender-based LS on pupils' behaviour; and assess the challenges MFH face in implementing their leadership styles in GBS. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted with a sample of 315 participants, comprising 306 teachers selected through simple random and nine (9) headteachers purposively sampled. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from teachers and headteachers, respectively. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (acceptable level of > 0.70). Quantitative data were analysed (descriptive and inferential statistics), and qualitative data were thematically analysed. The results show that male headteachers prioritise transactional, structure, and directive leadership, whereas female headteachers use transformational, relational, and participatory approaches. The study further established that the leadership style of headteachers has a statistically significant positive effect or influence on pupils' behaviour ($\beta = 0.873$, $t = 5.004$, $p < 0.05$; $p=0.000$). It was also observed that the leadership style of headteachers contributed 76.2% to pupils' behaviour ($R^2 = 0.762$). The research contributes to deepening the understanding of how gender influences leadership in GBS, gender-responsive and equity in educational leadership policies, provide evidence-based strategies to improve pupil behaviour and learning outcomes across GBS and beyond.

Keywords:

Adaptive leadership practices, leadership style, pupil behaviour, male and female headteachers, transformational leadership.