

Follower Response and Leader Effectiveness in Selected Public Basic Schools in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Collective responsibility that intertwines leadership and followership has been globally accepted as a viable means for attaining school goals. Yet, the influences of followers on the leader's effectiveness in such a relationship have traditionally been neglected in leadership research and practice. The objective of this study was to expand the evidence on how the role characteristics of followers contribute to headteacher effectiveness in public basic schools in Ghana. Anchored on leader-follower reciprocity theory, a phenomenological research design was employed with a sample size of 110. The sample consisted of 10 school heads, 30 teachers, 30 parents, 20 executives of school management committees, and 20 learners. Multi-stage sampling techniques were employed and involved the purposive sampling of the various respondents, with the exception of teachers, who were selected through snowballing. Data was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire and face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The data was analysed thematically, revealing themes, patterns, and trends relative to role-based behaviours in leader-follower relationships. The findings of the study indicate the existence of ample clarity in terms of government policies on the representation of followers within the education system in Ghana, yet dormancy and unrepresentativeness characterise most school committees from which followers derive. The findings also indicate inadequate role understanding, abilities, and other follower behaviours, which were key barriers to leader effectiveness. Based on the findings, it is recommended that community and school committees from which followers are drawn be re-composed and trained in order to make them more representative and more responsive to school heads.

Keywords: Basic School, Feedback, Followership, Leadership Style, Learning, Motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

There is global recognition of the power of collective responsibility driven by leadership in the attainment of organisational goals. It is also believed that the issue of leadership is of primary importance for organisations, given that how well organisations attain their goals is greatly influenced by the effectiveness or otherwise of leadership (Akpaprep et al., 2019; Schuetz, 2017; Suda, 2013). As public organisations, schools have goals whose achievements require effective leadership (Fuller, 2017; Dady & Bali, 2014). In the desire for effective leadership to promote school goals, there is an increasing need for more distributed leadership. As a collective endeavour, such distributive leadership involves multiple stakeholders and is historically grounded in the recognition that effective leadership is not confined to a single individual but is a shared responsibility for school improvement (Nadeem, 2024; Gronn, 2002).

Beyond distributive leadership, the centrality of individual leadership, particularly principals or heads of schools, and their specific and relational roles in driving schools to attain their goals is paramount (Bush, 2022; Kim, 2022). The school principal or head teacher is tasked with the overall responsibility of coordinating and directing the people and activities to achieve school goals, which are often to improve the performance of learners (Mensah and Mensah, 2015; Pont et al., 2008). Globally, an array of expectations of the school leader exist, particularly in more difficult educational situations (Cobinnah, 2020; Branch et al., 2013). The establishment of a tone for action in schools largely depends on the individual head. Fostering a positive school culture, creating a proactive school mentality, and supporting and improving staff motivation are critical expectations of heads of schools (Education Development Trust, 2016). Within the basic school system in Ghana, the head teacher represents such individual leaders whose role

expectations largely revolve around planning, instruction, administration, visioning, collaboration, and communitive and relationship building (Esia-Donkor, 2014).

Given the multi-stakeholders involved, the headteacher is expected to function in ways that ensure positive team effort. This implies that the role of headteachers is largely relational, and as leaders they are only effective as long as they are able to work with others, mostly followers and successfully navigating the human and material resources, systems and processes in order to reach the goal of the organisation (Hurduzeu, 2015; Suda, 2013).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kelley (1992), a pioneer and prominent promoter of followership literature, maintains that leadership holds no significance and that there is neither the existence of nor necessity for leaders without followers. Leadership and followership are intertwined, where effective followership significantly shapes leadership and vice versa. Qureshi (2023) maintains that followers have nearly the same importance as leaders, as they can shape leadership in significant and varied ways. However, while the question about the relationship between school leadership and performance is gaining more attention, the influences of followers on the leader's effectiveness, particularly in the school setting, has traditionally been neglected and is only gaining prominence in the leadership research more recently (Cruickshank, 2017; Suda, 2013). As observed by Warren (2015), the inadequate attention paid to follower perspectives and behaviours remains a huge gap, given that in practice, at least 80% of the tasks in social institutions, including schools, are actually performed by the followers. Indeed, Kelley (1992) has maintained that historically, the effectiveness of followers contributes to 80% of the success of every organisation.

In the Ghanaian public-school setting, the key followers include teachers and any other school-based officers with instructional responsibility. The other followers are learners, parents, school management committee members, Parent Teacher Association executives, other community members and local leaders (Duorinaah, 2020, Cobinnah, 2020; Abreh, 2017). These followers assume immense relational roles with their headteachers. Research on the exact number, composition, and behaviours of those considered followers in Ghana's basic education system and how their behaviours and actions influence the effectiveness of the school heads remains a major gap in the leadership discourse, as limited evidence on these presently exists.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were;

- i. To examine the role characteristics and the nature of response of followers towards head teachers in selected public basic schools in Ghana
- ii. To assess ways in which the behavior of followers affects the effectiveness of head teachers head teachers in selected public basic schools in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the attributes and role characteristics of followers in the basic school system in Ghana?
- ii. In what ways do the behaviours of followers influence the effectiveness of their head teachers in basic schools in Ghana?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was inspired by Price and Van-Vugt's (2014) theorisation of leader-follower relationships. Reciprocity between leaders and their followers is key where a voluntary leader-follower relationship assumes a central role in efforts to achieve organisational goals. In such a relationship, group coordination is critical, driven mutually by the leader, with beneficial reciprocity for both the leader and the followers. The leader exercises a responsibility to invest in time and resources in order to provide the followers with critical needs and to stimulate them to act. Reciprocally, the followers, particularly those that are considered critical or first active (Kelley, 1992), provide leaders with prestige that transcends tangible products to include follower behaviour, both perceived and actual. As demonstrated by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), followership behaviours involve behaviors exhibited from the standpoint of a follower role relative to the leader and in the act of following. They connote the activities to support, obey, or resist the leader's influence attempts, manifesting further in cooperation, respect, and loyalty. The leader becomes effective, and organisational goals are realised when followers experience a sense of belonging, respect, and trust, as well as encounters that encourage a collective vision, mutual support, and collaboration. On the contrary, prestige is not guaranteed, leadership effectiveness becomes challenged, and goals may not be met when the followers fail to play their role (Price & Van-Vugt, 2014; Suda, 2013).

2.1.1 Followership

In the absence of a single comprehensive conceptualisation, followership is best understood as deriving from follower, the latter of which connotes subordination and one in which there appears neither drive nor initiative until persuaded (Lapierre et al., 2014; Carter, 2009). Indeed, Lapierre et al. (2014) theorise that followers are traditionally perceived as individuals or groups within systems who concede to a leader's directives. Followership involves actor(s) who are directed by another actor(s), their attributes, traits, behaviours, context, cognitive processes, and functional relationships relative to leadership (Loyola et al., 2023; Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2020).

2.1.2 Leader effectiveness

Leadership is a complex concept that has yet to be given a comprehensive definition (Northouse, 2019). Yukl (2013) defines leadership as a process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to understand and influence others in order to achieve a shared objective. As a multidimensional construct, leadership involves personality—either an individual or group with traits and behaviour, power, and an expectation—for driving others through a relational process in order to achieve a desired goal. Leader effectiveness comprises how well the leader performs their functions, their influence on the followers, which eventually leads to goal attainment, and the consequences of the leader's actions (Madanchian et al., 2017, Northouse, 2019, Uhl-Bien, 2014, Yukl, 2013, Bass & Aviola, 1994).

2.1.3 Situating Followership and Leader Effectiveness in the Study

In the public basic school setting, the head teacher functions relationally with a wide range of stakeholders, and these are the followers. The key role-based behaviours of the followers that this study adopted are concomitant with respect, cooperation, and loyalty, which resonate with Price and Van-Vugt's (2014) domains of follower attributes, feedback, obedience, cooperation, and subordination. Proactive actions such as followers representing their heads in delegative roles, material support from followers to the head teachers and constructive feedback represent follower support. On the other hand, constructive resistance, apathy, and influencing tactics represent resistive or reactionary responses of the followers, as noted by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014). Beyond these, proximity and frequency of engagement with the head teacher, follower knowledge, and awareness about their role and their actual performance constitute other nuanced attributes.

In the matter of leader effectiveness, the Head Teacher's Handbook of Ghana and the Guidelines for the Formation and Operation of School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations are the blueprints for school leadership at the junior high school level (Ghana Education Service, 2010a; Ghana Education Service, 2010b). These documents, however, provide for no specific performance targets or milestones for gauging the extent to which headteachers deliver on their mandate or how the actions and inactions of their followers may influence headteachers. Therefore, as proxies, the study adopted stakeholder perception and satisfaction about how well their head teachers were leading their schools and how well follower responses had influenced the delivery of their mandate. In line with this, head teacher effectiveness was limited to the ease with which head teachers accomplish their administrative and instructional duties, their response to follower feedback, shifts in community school relationships, school cohesion, and disciplinary concerns.

2.2 Empirical Review

The consideration of the holistic influence that followers exert on their leader has mostly been empirically neglected (Loyola et al., 2023; Ford & Harding, 2015; and Kelley, 1992). This notwithstanding, the limited empirical literature on followership highlights the crucial role of followers in making leaders more effective in specific domains of the leader's performance. Inderjeet et al. (2022) conducted a study on the relationship between followership behaviours and their impact on the leadership process. Their study, which covered 287 surveyed respondents across different industries in South Africa, found that follower perceptions as active agents in problem identification and other co-productive actions have a positive influence on their ability to communicate their opinions on their tasks or provide feedback to their leaders. Followers who perceive no active role in problem identification exhibit apathy towards their leader. The study by Inderjeet et al. provided deeper insights into followership behaviours but was limited to the leadership process. This study extends the scope to include results on the leader's output, such as their effectiveness. Khan et al. (2020)

investigated the role of followership dimensions in the transformational leadership process, with an emphasis on trust as a mediating variable. From data from 506 respondents in Pakistan's telecom sector, their study revealed that trust appreciably mediates a direct relationship between followership and leadership. The study makes a strong case for followers' development as a precondition for better followership, which would in turn contribute to effective leadership for achieving organisational goals sustainably.

On the impact of followership, Gesang et al. (2021) discovered that follower behaviour indeed has a significant effect on leaders to varying degrees, chiefly emotional, attitudinal, behavioural, and occupational effort. While the study by Gesang (2021) shifted the prevailing perspective of the leader as the causal actor in the leader-follower relationship, it was limited to interviews with only German leaders. This present study includes the perspectives of the followers. Qureshi (2023) conducted a study on the role of followership dimensions in shaping leaders' behavior. As a quantitative and cross-sectional study, Qureshi concluded that followership does predict leadership behaviour significantly. On getting the best out of followers, the study found that when followers have the opportunity to play their active role through their involvement with leaders, they are able to make significant contributions to decisions and actions, which reshape and modify leaders' behaviour.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in the West Mamprusi Municipality and the Talensi Districts of Ghana. The study districts are largely rural, predominantly agrarian, and comparatively deprived in terms of basic social amenities. The total population of the area is 262,776, with 50.7% of these being female (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). There were 100 junior high schools, 700 teachers, and 12,989 pupils in the study districts (Republic of Ghana, 2022). The location and multicultural context of these districts presented a compelling interest in understanding how the actions of followers within the Ghanaian junior school system influence teachers' leadership.

3.2 Research Design

A phenomenological research design was adopted as it contains corresponding approaches that facilitate an understanding of the perspective of people, irrespective of their backgrounds and circumstances. It also facilitated an accurate and factual description of the phenomenon of leader-follower reciprocity within the study context, where the authors had no foreknowledge of any pre-existing framework (Welman and Kruger in Groenewald, 2004).

3.3 Sample Size and Techniques of Sampling

Multi-stage sampling techniques were employed in selecting 110 respondents from head teachers, teachers, learners, parents, School Management Committee members, Parent Teacher Association members, and community leaders. Since every sampled school had only one head teacher, they were purposefully included as respondents. A snowballing method was also employed in selecting three other teachers from each school. Based on their routine interaction with head teachers, the first teacher was selected from each school, and after an interview, he or she recommended the next teacher until the total sample was reached. The parent of the first child on the register of each class was selected, making a total of three parents from each sampled school and 30 parents in total. The class prefects of Form Three classes as well as the senior prefects in the 2021–2022 academic year from all study schools were purposefully selected, and these made a total of twenty learners.

3.4 Instruments and Data Collection

Semi-structured questionnaires and interview guides were employed in collecting field data. As part of the data collection, head teachers, teachers, and other parents who possessed an appreciable level of formal education self-administered the questionnaire. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the rest of the respondents, mostly those with no or little formal education. As a means of triangulating and obtaining an in-depth understanding of key responses, the researchers conducted follow-up interviews with about 50% of the head teachers and 5% of the other respondents.

3.5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Once collected, and prior to actual analysis, the data was thoroughly reviewed and cleaned, and critical gaps were filled through virtual and in-person clarifications. The data analysis included coding, based on pre-determined themes and sub-themes to reveal patterns and trends relative to role-based behaviors in leader-follower relationships. Once analysed, the data was presented in simple frequency tables, charts and figures, strengthened by quotations and testimonies as shown in the results section.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The authors adopted a blended approach to ensuring the validity and reliability of methods and tools. Prior to the actual conduct of fieldwork, the study design was thoroughly reviewed by an expert in leadership studies at a reputable research institution in Ghana. The data collection tools were informed by Kelley's (1992) Followership

Questionnaire, which has been globally acclaimed as an effective tool for assessing followership. As suggested by Creswell (2014), two other experts in leadership and organisational studies evaluated the validity of the content of each tool, checking and confirming the validity of every question. Then, a pre-test of the tools was conducted in a neighbouring school, and their outcomes, in terms of consistency of responses against the expected responses, informed a final round of review of the tools. Following actual data collection, a content validity study was conducted, which ensured that only items that yielded the required and meaningful responses were included in drawing conclusions.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Follower Attributes and Role Characteristics

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

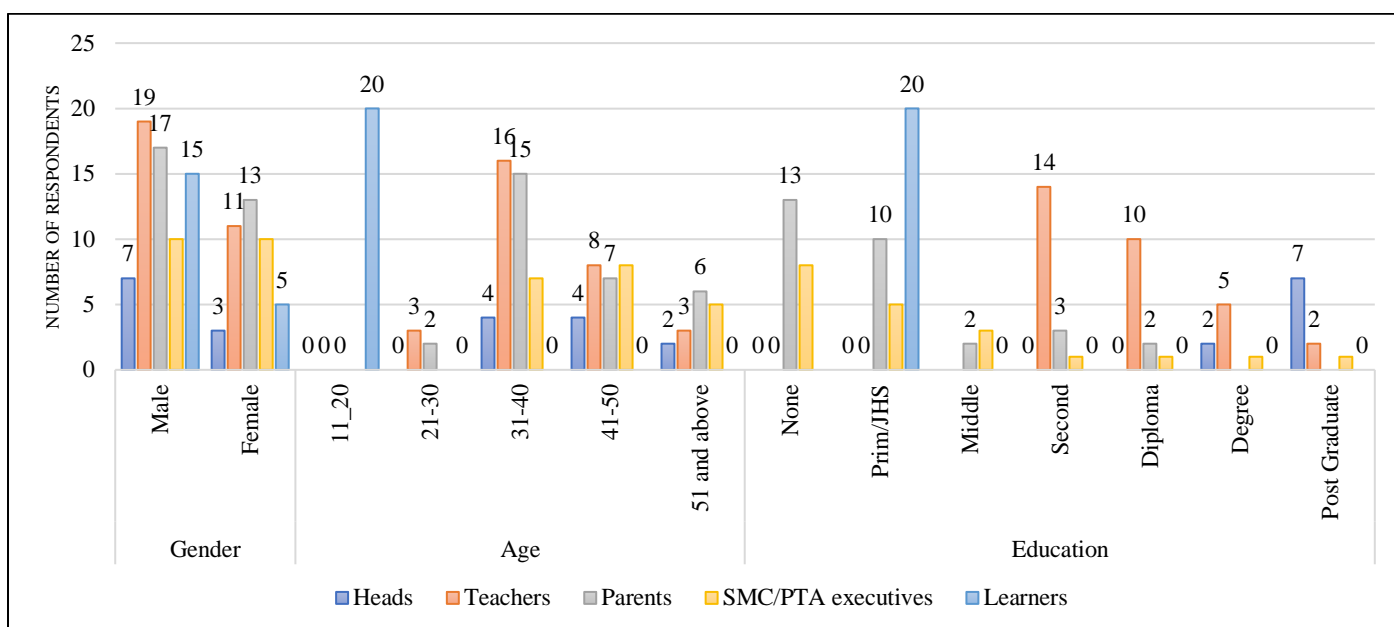


Figure 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In total, 110 respondents were sampled for the study, with a 100% response rate. The results in Figure 1 show that out of 110 respondents, 68 of them (61.8%) were male, constituting the majority. Beyond the learners who were below 20 years old, 62.7% of the other respondents were aged 31 to 50 years. In terms of educational qualification, 70.0% of the head teachers had a postgraduate diploma or above, which conforms to the Ghana Education Service Policy on having a tertiary qualification before becoming a headteacher. More than half (52.4%) of teachers possessed a diploma or above, while 83% of parents and members of the school committees were either middle school leavers or had no formal education.

The findings on the gender composition and level of educational qualification imply a male-dominated leadership ecosystem, as the majority of the respondents, teachers, and other members of follower groups were males and also a fairly educated cadre of followers. From a gendered perspective, this male dominance is consistent with the trend in the share and influence of women in almost all development trajectories in Ghana. As emphasised by Sasu (2023), Ghana’s gender gap index score of 0.67 as of 2021 indicates that females were 33% less likely to have the same opportunities, including representation. Having fewer women as teachers and executives of school committees in particular implies limited female influence within the ecosystem of junior high school leadership.

Similarly, with the exception of teachers and the learners in the school, the majority of the followers have no or very low formal education. Even though formal education is not a requirement for becoming a member of school committees, follower characteristics such as educational qualification and other capabilities are important in making them the ideal followers and in capacitating them to support and engage meaningfully with their leader. In their study on the traits desired in an ideal follower, Benson et al. (2024) observe that, beyond cooperation and being dutiful, follower assertiveness, reflected in confidence, and being ambitious, brought about in part by education and training, are critical qualities for engaging leaders. An appreciable level of formal education and other exposures are catalysts

for follower support and action, as most communication regarding school matters is often in English, requiring the ability to read with understanding. The comparatively low levels of education among the community-based respondents are therefore a limitation.

4.1.2 Role Relations

The study showed that followers can be categorised into three groups. The first category comprises school-based followers comprising learners and teachers, including volunteers and Arabic instructors. These are more physically present in the school and relate more routinely to the school head. Parents and other community members, including chiefs and opinion leaders, constituted community-based followers. Comparatively, these followers are less frequent in their engagement with school heads. In providing more details, the headteacher of WE AW5 (not real name) Junior High School said, “Depending on the physical location of the school, the only time they may engage more directly with the leader is when they visit the school.” Members of school management committees, parents’ associations, and community leaders belong to the intersecting group as they are drawn from the community and school. These intersect, as some can be parents with children in school and at the same time be teachers.

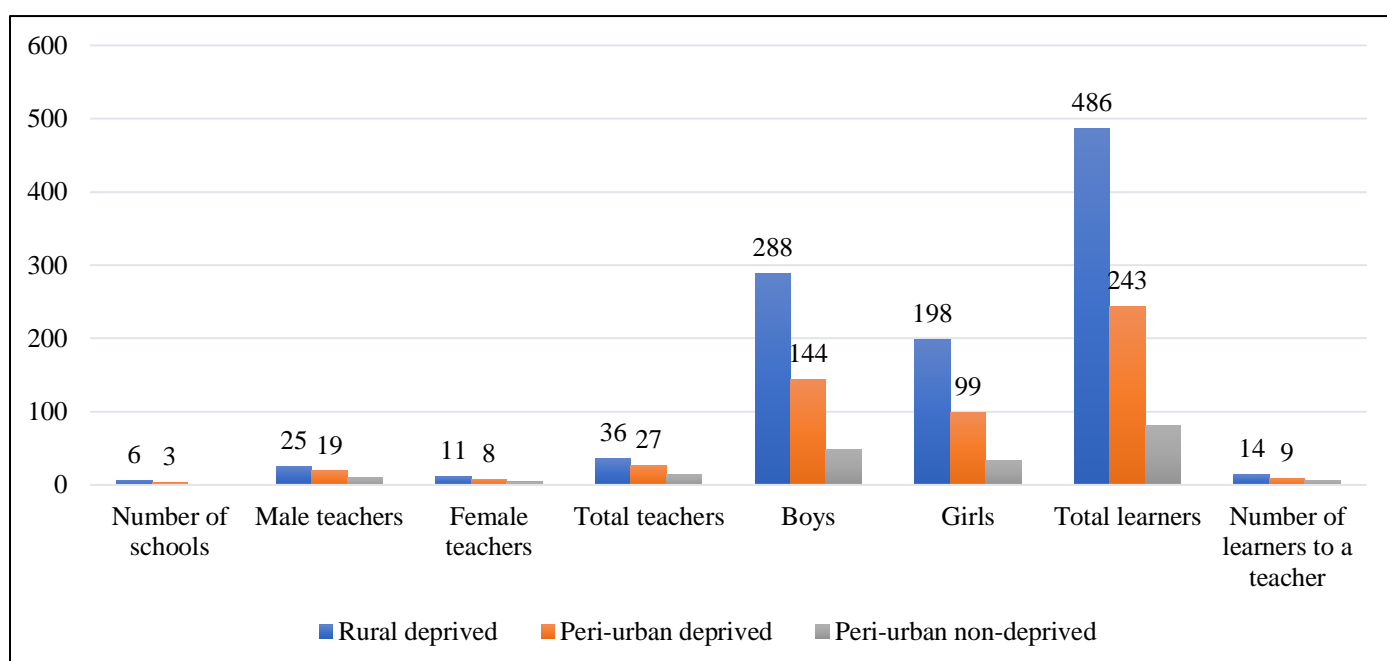


Figure 2
Teacher and Learner Availability

As shown in Figure 2, in the 2021–2022 academic year, there were 77 teachers in the study schools. Only 28.9% of the teachers were female, which implies that staffing is male-dominated. Also, the more rural and deprived schools had an average of four teachers per school, compared to 10 in the only urban, non-deprived school. It was explained that teachers often refuse postings to rural schools, and when they do, they commute from the cities. This is due to the absence of decent accommodation and other basic social amenities. Inadequate teachers in rural schools may not only affect instructional effectiveness but also other administrative and related areas where their delegative responses may enhance the work of the school leader.

The study revealed that in the 2021–2022 academic year, there were 810 learners in the schools. These comprised 480 girls and 330 boys. This implies a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:11. Compared with the Ghana Education Policy of 25 learners to one teacher, it may appear that teachers in the study schools have a manageable instructional workload. However, since teaching at the junior high level is subject-based and not class-based, most of the schools lacked qualified subject teachers. As a consequence, all the head teachers were also teaching some subjects in addition to their routine headship duties, while some teachers indicated that they have often been overworked and have limited opportunity to support their heads. Also, blending lesson delivery and oversight for the duties of teachers who teach subjects they have no prior professional training in can affect how well the head performs their duty.

These findings imply that, within the study schools, evidence of all the key follower categories, as provided for by policy in Ghana’s education system, could be found. Significantly different, however, was that, contrary to the guidelines on school committees, there is a general and covert exclusion of representatives of local government,

district education offices, and prominent citizens from the composition of the school committees, from which most followers derive. A non-adherence to guidelines on representation and tenure of leadership characterised nearly all the school committees, and this has been the cause of the exclusion of the other followers. In the absence of other critical members of such groups, they become unrepresentative and can pose legitimacy concerns.

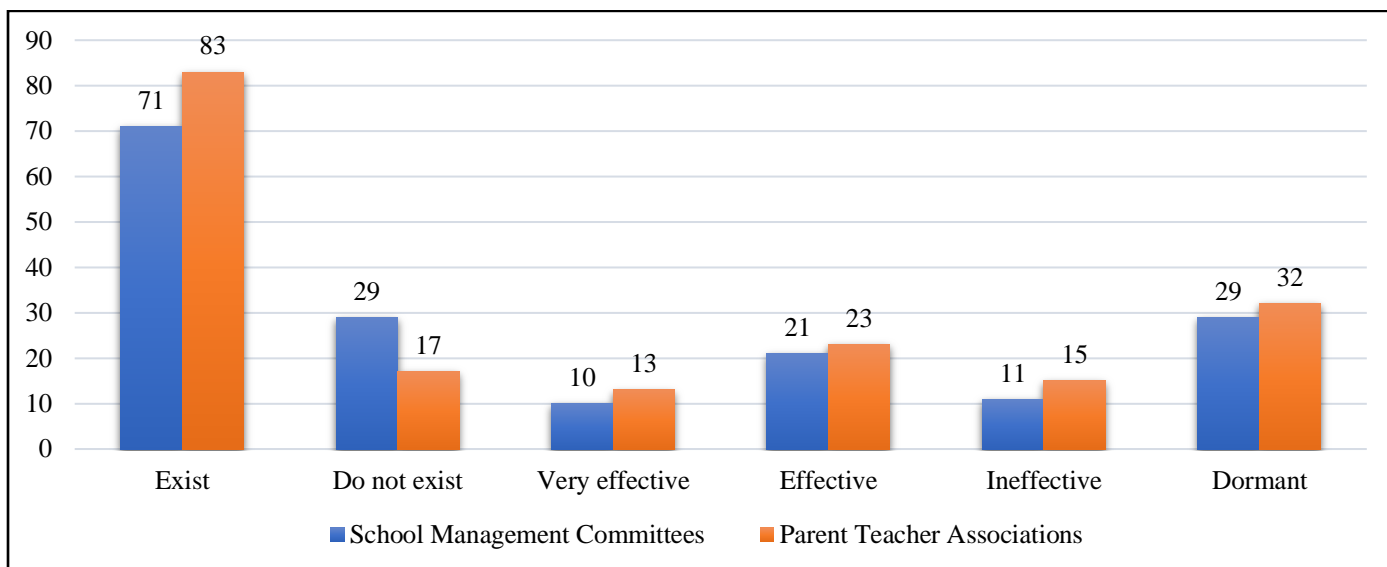


Figure 3
Availability and Effectiveness of School Committees

The data presented in Figure 3 reveals that 79.0% and 92.0% of respondents, excluding the learners, indicated that there were school management committees and parent-teacher associations in their schools. Among those who confirmed their existence, 56.3% maintained that they merely existed but were either ineffective or dormant. A review of school records revealed that the average number of School management committee members was 11, and less than 30% of the members were females in 80% of the schools. The low representation of women in school management committees has implications on how they relate and support the female heads in particular. Also, membership of the School Management Committees derived from more than one community while adherence to the guidelines for the committees emerged as key concerns that have an implication on legitimacy to represent and relate with leadership. The head teacher of one school said;

“As you can see, this school is located between two communities, WE6A and WE6B. Only those who are around all the time and can come for meetings are put there as the SMC members.”

The School Management Committee Chairperson of TNWE JHS also said:

“As far as I can remember, it is over 10 years since they made me the chairman and I am still the chairman of this SMC. I have no idea whether there is a length of time I should be the chairman. It is like anytime the head teacher wants us to discuss something or when some visitors are coming to the school that he calls us together.”

The absence of critical representatives in some follower categories makes these unrepresentative. The nature and functionality of school committees are similar to findings by Abreh (2017) in two districts in Ghana, where school governance and management committees are hardly functional. Abreh concluded that where the school committees were quite functional, their work was usually left to the chairman and, in some cases, to the chair of the chair of the Parent Teachers Association. The present state of the school committees is therefore convoluted, and this may have implications for the followers’ role-based influence on their school heads, as the latter are expected to function within a context characterised by dominance by some groups, including the including the majority of followers who may have a low level of education as revealed earlier in their educational qualifications and may lack the ability to respond appropriately.

Also, concerns about low follower awareness about their role relations emerged, as did concern about their capacity to engage their leaders and other behaviours, including interference. The low capacity and interference in particular are consistent with a study by Serunjogi (2022), in which it was revealed that in Uganda, capacity gaps and low motivation continue to limit school committee members’ support for head teachers. A low capacity of a follower can pose limitations on followers’ ability to engage the leader in other role-based behaviours such as support, constructive criticism, feedback, and legitimate resistance.

4.1.3 Follower Support

Table 1

Support from Teachers

Type of support	Male teachers		Female teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Filing and record keeping	12	11	5	45
Delivering head teacher's lessons	8	42	4	36
Development of school plan	5	26	3	27
Community school relationship	3	16	3	27
Supervising teaching and learning	10	53	5	45
Developing school curriculum timetable	5	26	3	27
No support	9	47	4	36

As shown in Table 1, one in three teachers confirmed that they frequently supported their headteacher in at least one of six key areas of the latter's responsibility. The dominant support was in supervision, including ensuring the punctuality of learners and other teachers in school and in the classroom. Also, 42.0% of male teachers and 36.0% of female teachers would often deliver the lessons that their head teachers were responsible for, particularly when the head teachers were busy with other administrative responsibilities or absent from school. The compilation of school records, notably registers and learners' report cards, representation at external meetings, and the promotion of healthy community school relationships are other ways teachers frequently supported their school heads.

On their part, 72% of learners confirmed that they mostly undertake cleaning and tidying their headteacher's office and accommodation, caring for the babies of their female heads, and occasionally donating food items to the heads. The rest, however, indicated that they hardly provided any support in the last academic year and never remembered doing so in previous years. Beyond being asked occasionally to do so, they often pursue these voluntarily, having been convinced that their support goes a long way towards improving the work of the heads.

Table 2

Support from Parents and School Committees

Support	SMC & PTA		Other Parents	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Provision and repair of infrastructure	7	35	8	26
Relationship between parents and school authorities	6	30	9	30
Financial contributions	10	50	14	46
Incentives and motivation to head and teachers	2	10	4	13
Teacher monitoring and supervision	3	15	3	10
Student supervision	5	25	11	36
Moral encouragement	6	30	8	26
Security and protection from potential harm	4	20	6	20
No support	11	55	16	53

Table 2 shows that 50.0% of members of school committees and 46.0% of other parents often supported their headteachers with financial contributions, which are often used by headteachers to meet some school needs. Representation of their head teacher in the promotion of cordial relationships among parents, teachers, and learners, personal security, and protection of heads from possible harm by some community members also emerged as the most frequent ways committee members respond to their school heads. Furthermore, some executive members of school management committees often offer moral encouragement to their head teachers, particularly during times when the latter face challenges regarding misconduct and insubordination by teachers and learners.

The pursuit of these varied actions relative to their heads, from direct material contribution and representation to feedback, reflects their support behaviours. In a study of school committee relational duties to headteachers in Uganda, Serunjogi (2022) observed that, on average, such committee members work collaboratively with the head teachers in attending to disciplinary reports and sanctioning errant teachers and learners. The diverse but interrelated forms of support from school committee members and parents go a long way towards improving the effectiveness of school heads. When part of the leader's task is accomplished by followers, it eases the burden of delivery, especially

in school contexts where there are very few people in leadership. The support can also free up more time, therefore improving the quality of head teachers' delivery.

In an affirmation of the influence of follower support, nearly all the head teachers acknowledged that the support they receive from these stakeholders significantly improves the environment within which they function and shapes their effectiveness as leaders of the school. In particular, moral support, often involving discussions and assurances of their backing from School Management Committee members increases the confidence of head teachers, while the feeling of being safe from harm is an assurance that enables them go about their duties. The financial contribution towards the procurement of office and related materials enhances the administrative duties of 70.6% of the heads. As lamented by one head teacher from WNEB Junior High School, *'for some time now, the capitation grant and general logistics from the district office are hardly provided, yet heads must perform their office duties'*.

Conversely, nearly half (42%) of teachers, 55% of the school committee members, and 53% of the parents indicated they hardly provided any form of support to their head teachers. Time poverty due to overloaded lesson schedules affects the ability of the majority of those who hardly extend any assistance to their head teachers. Also, the non-delegating and non-involving styles of some heads often prevent some followers from responding to such heads. In the instance of members of school committees who provide no support, low capacity was identified as a key barrier. Others believe that beyond sending children to school and occasionally attending meetings, members of school management committees and parents' committees are too distant from management and can be perceived to be interfering in the duties of the head teacher. In their typology on how follower responses differ, Kellerman, in Yordanova (2014), maintains that followers who are considered isolates or bystanders are detached, passively support the status quo by not taking action, and exhibit no real commitment or interest in influencing their leaders to bring about change.

4.1.4 Follower Feedback

Figure 4 shows that in the last academic year, 36% of the respondents frequently provided one or more forms of the feedback while the majority (64%) provided none. Headteachers' style of relating with others, discipline and general performance of learners were the dominant issues of the feedback they provided.

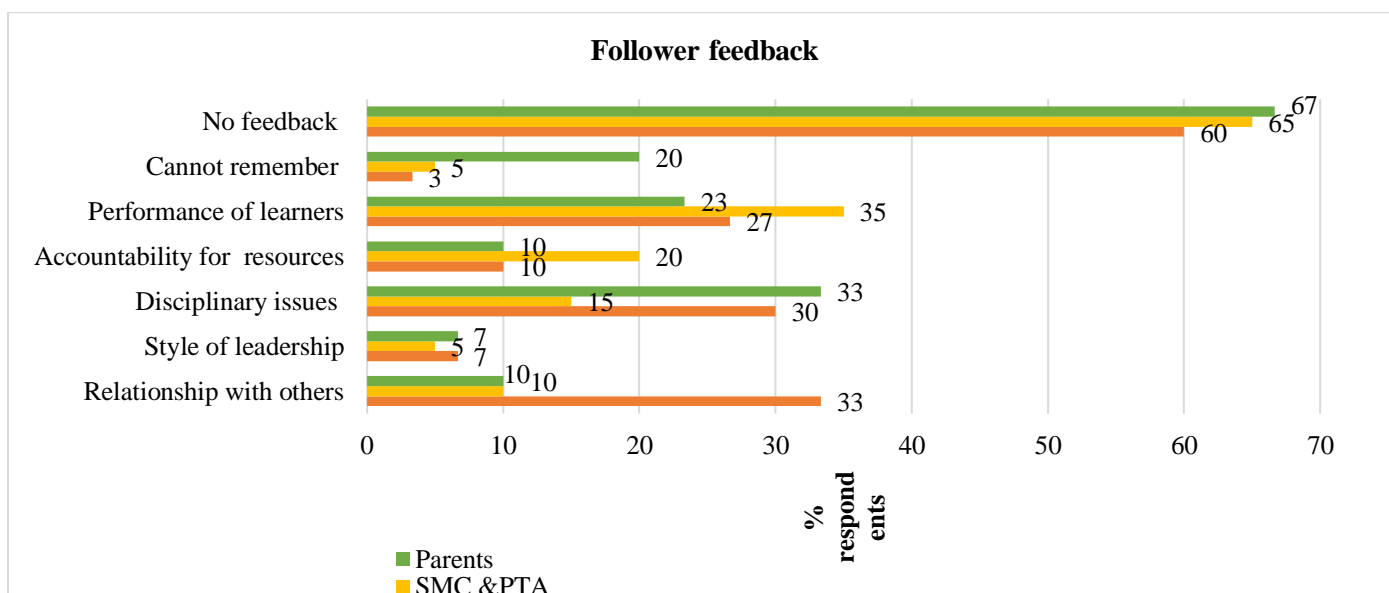


Figure 4
Follower Feedback

The more positive feedback involved a commendation or appreciation of the work of the head teacher. Some respondents openly commended their heads for their hard work and transformational qualities particularly in deepening engagements between the school and parents or improving school attendance and performance of learners. These notwithstanding, much of the feedback were often negative and sometimes perceived by headteachers as detractions. As observed in separate discussions with one head teacher and a member of one school management committee in EWNEB Community,

"...it is all complaints. The only time that committee members, teachers or parents come to the head teacher is to complain or talk only about problems."

Specifically, in the last academic year, 28% of the respondents frequently complained to their headteacher about the poor performance of learners in end-of-term examinations. Others sought clarity on rumours regarding inadequate contact time between learners and teachers. Also, one in four respondents maintained that they personally drew the attention of their head teacher to teacher and learner absenteeism, while nearly one in ten respondents demonstrated discomfort regarding the manner in which their headteacher was managing the school capitation grant.

About 10% of the majority of respondents who provided no feedback could hardly remember any concern that required the attention of their headteachers. A feeling of reluctance and silence on the part of the head in reaching out to them, a lack of awareness about what to give as feedback and how to do it, doubts about the outcome of their engagement with the head, and fear of being victimised are the other reasons for the dearth of follower feedback.

Feedback from followers to their leaders matters a lot as it supports reflection and the process of change, improves leader practices, and minimises potential risk (Albrecht et al., 2019). Where school heads accept both positive and negative feedback and act on it, they can go a long way towards improving their practices as leaders and, invariably, their effectiveness. On the other hand, where feedback is ignored, resisted, or unappreciated, it may yield little value addition to leader effectiveness or have far-reaching negative consequences for leadership practices. In their study on ego and follower voice in multinational oil and gas exploration and refinery organisations, Fast et al. (2014) found that managers with low perceived ability to meet the elevated competence expectations associated with their roles feel their ego is threatened. The authors concluded that such managers tend to minimise follower voices as a way of compensating for such a threat. Therefore, the extent to which feedback and other forms of support influence their effectiveness depends largely on how and what the leaders do with them.

4.1.5 Other Follower Behaviors

In Figure 5, the responses regarding the impact of some follower behaviors are presented. While 52% of the respondents strongly agreed that certain types of follower behavior have an impact on how well school heads perform their duties, 37%, mostly parents, indicated that they had no idea.

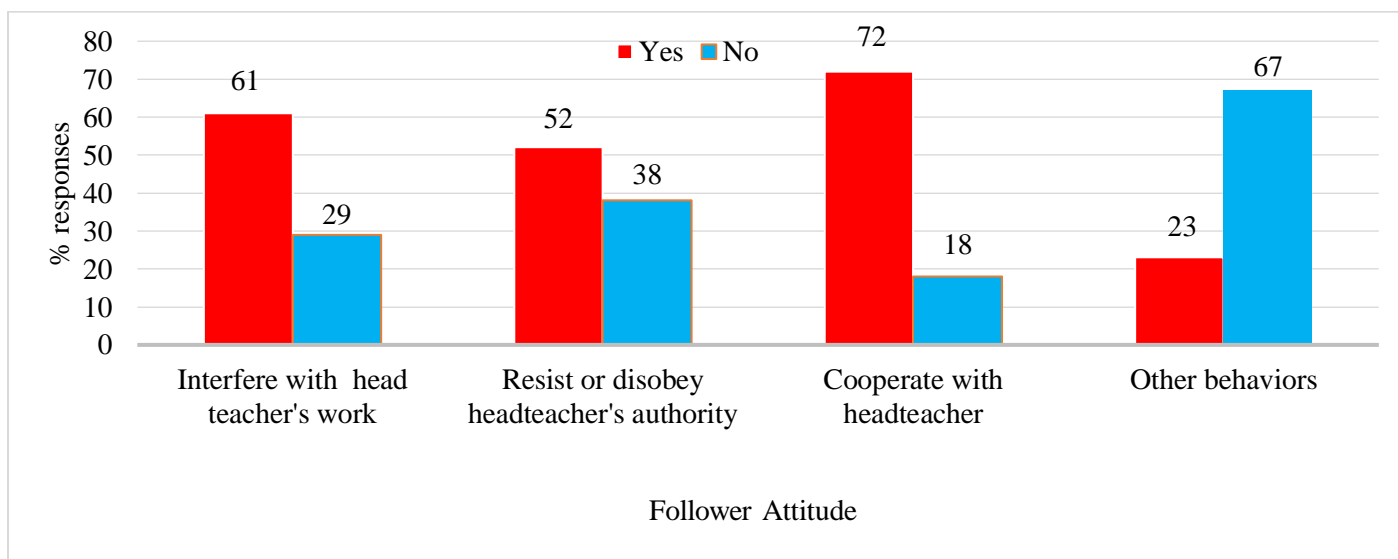


Figure 5
Other Behaviors

For respondents that strongly agreed, majority of them identified lack of cooperation and other resistive behaviors such as disobedience and insubordination as issues of real concern to leadership. In particular, disregard for school rules, absenteeism and refusal to carry through agreed tasks were the more common follower behaviors. On their frequency and manifestation, the Chairperson of the Parent Teacher Association in WNWEA Community said, *“Oh, these kinds of behavior towards our head teacher are not too frequent. May be, in a whole term we will witness only one teacher misbehaving towards the head.”*

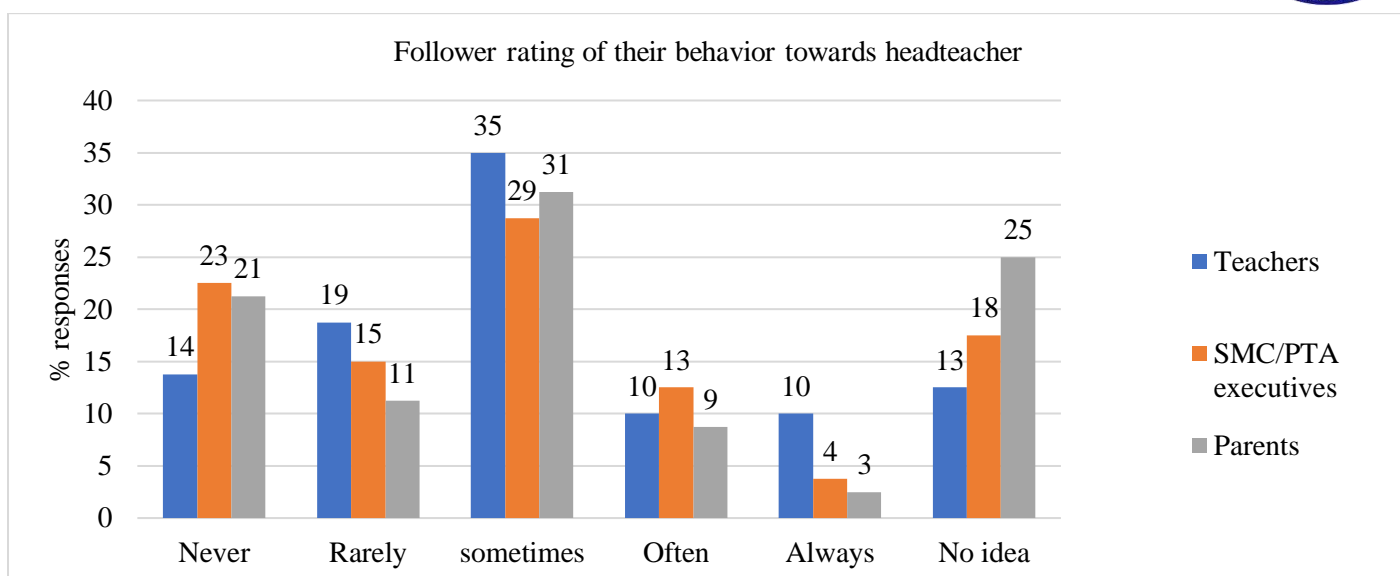


Figure 6a
Likelihood of Behavior Occurring

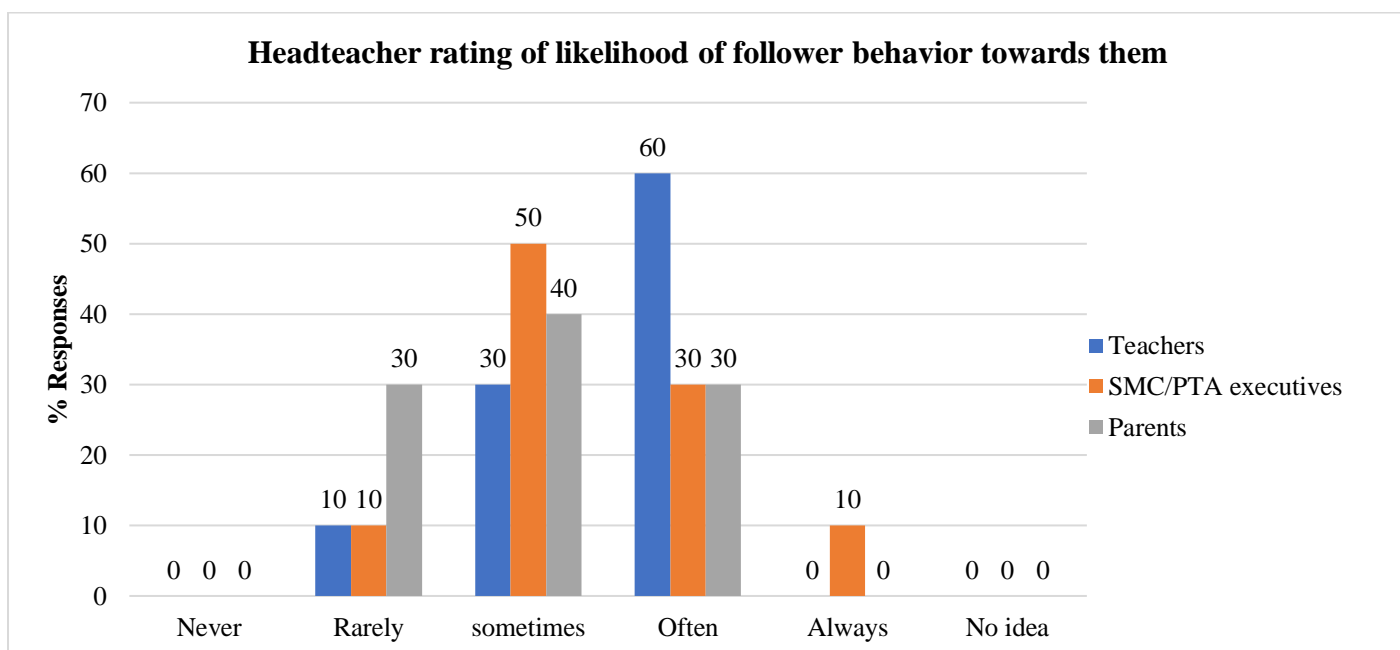
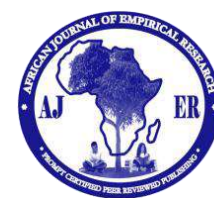


Figure 6b
Likelihood of Behavior Occurring

As contained in Figure 6a, teachers were rated as more likely and most frequent in such behavior. Similar to the follower rating, Figure 6b shows that nearly all headteachers (90%) maintained that their teachers frequently demonstrate grave insubordination, are uncooperative, or interfere in their duties. A female head teacher from TEWEB Junior High School said,

Some of my teachers, particularly the young male teachers, think they know everything and so behave rudely towards me.

Follower responses such as interference and a lack of support and cooperation with school heads can significantly affect the leader’s ability to function effectively. In particular, lack of support and feedback from the members of school committees, parents, and local leaders resonates with the position of Matshoba-Ramuedzisi et al. (2022), which stresses that such behaviours constitute ineffective followership in role-based approaches that tend to undermine leadership effectiveness. Also, studies confirming the negative impact of a lack of support, apathy, uncooperativeness, and other forms of follower behaviours, particularly teachers, towards school heads include Mwanzia (2017), who found that the majority of Kenyan school heads experienced more disrespect and stereotyping



from male teachers. Head teachers cannot be effective if their followers fail to play their expected roles. Where followers tend to exhibit negative behaviours, they can undermine the authority of the head teacher and inhibit their effectiveness as leaders. An absence of cooperation, particularly by teachers whose role relations with school heads are more routine, can impact the effectiveness of school heads negatively. Interference erodes the confidence and authority of head teachers, leading to vulnerability and ineffectiveness.

4.2 Effects of Follower Behaviors on Head Teachers’ Effectiveness

Table 3
Level of Satisfaction about Head Teacher Delivery

Follower	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers	6	20	14	47	2	7	5	17	3	10
Learners	2	10	11	55	7	35	0	0	0	0
SMC&PTA executives	1	5	8	40	5	25	3	15	3	15
Parents	7	23	5	17	12	40	2	7	4	13
Head teachers	2	20	6	60	2	20	0	0	0	0

As shown in Table 3, 58% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the leadership qualities and delivery of their teacher. Forty-two percent, however, were either dissatisfied or uncertain. The self-rating revealed that 80% of the headteachers were either satisfied or very satisfied with their own leadership. A positive rating by nearly half of the followers can be a testament and an endorsement of the positive transformation that head teachers were impacting on their schools or followers, since follower perception could be largely informed by their experiences and/or what they hear from other followers. On the other hand, once more than half of the followers were unable to agree with a leader’s effectiveness, that may suggest concerns regarding leadership effectiveness. Interviews with the head teachers suggest that feedback from their followers, irrespective of their nature, actually affects the ways they perform their leadership functions. For instance, 42.9% of the heads who received one or more forms of feedback in the last 12 months confirmed that they felt more confident, assured, and empowered to do more for their schools. Three headteachers indicated that they often welcome and appreciate such feedback. Sometimes, some headteachers confide in their colleague heads regarding the implications of some feedback before taking action. As explained by the head teacher of TNWE7 Junior High School,

“The last time the chairman told me that my teachers complained about their non-involvement in managing capitation grants, I now ensure that all teachers take part in the drawing and execution of the SPIP. I now receive a lot of good ideas from my teachers, which is helping us manage our capitation grant well.”

Headteachers who are willing to take action based on the feedback they find merit eventually improve their ways of leading their school. On the contrary, 24% of the headteachers felt the feedback from their followers contributed negatively, as they often felt worried, uncertain, and, in some instances, vulnerable. Some felt their followers were seeking to undermine their leadership, particularly in situations where the feedback was more about concerns or challenges. At times, some heads would assume a passive attitude while others dismissed some feedback. Studies such as Papasava (2017) and Ni et al. (2023) stress the far-reaching effect of negative feedback on leaders. That notwithstanding, Papasava (2017) maintains that negative feedback ought not demotivate leaders. Rather, leaders should employ negative feedback as a guide for improving their delivery and becoming better at their roles.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the guidelines on school leadership as contained in the Head Teachers Handbook of Ghana exclude targets for measuring head teachers’ attainment of their roles in relation to followers and school improvement. Nonetheless, the guidelines provide ample clarity and direction regarding who represents followers and their role relative to headteachers. Across the majority of the schools, a disconnect exists in terms of what the guidelines provide against the actual numbers and composition of followers, the

actual representation, and the practice of followership within Ghana's public junior high schools. Due to their proximity and routine role relations, teachers impact the actions of leadership more than others.

Non-adherence to policies on the composition of members of school committees has been a major cause of the dormancy of follower committees in junior high schools. The exclusion of critical groups of stakeholders in school committees makes the committees unrepresentative, which raises legitimacy concerns in their role relations with their leaders. The inability of follower groups to function more responsively due to their comparatively low levels of education and related reasons also has implications in terms of their appreciation of their role and the extent to which they can influence their head teachers in support of school improvement.

Direct support often takes the form of tangible materials or leads on specific duties of the head, though in more delegative roles. Follower feedback on leadership actions or inactions was the most dominant response. In addition to the extension of varied forms of support, some teachers, parents, and members of school committees would often not hesitate to engage and provide feedback to the school heads on concerns they had, while at the same time, the responses of the majority of the followers, particularly teachers, can be attitudinal, including disregard for school rules, refusal to perform agreed tasks, absenteeism, and a lack of cooperation with heads.

Follower apathy towards head teachers, manifested in neither proactive support nor taking advantage of opportunities extended to them to participate in efforts that could make their heads more effective, can have a negative effect on head teacher effectiveness. In instances where school and community-based followers were present and considered more responsive, head teachers attested to the value of such acts in facilitating their duties as school leaders. Follower support and feedback contributed to the reduced burden of junior school heads, particularly in instructional duties, and this leveraged spaces and enabled concentration on other areas of leadership. Headteachers also felt more confident, assured, and empowered to do more for their schools, which led to more positive attainment of school goals.

5.2 Recommendations

In order to enhance follower response and realise effective school leadership, sustained sensitisation and training for followers are recommended. The training should depart from a focus on only provisions in the Head Teacher's Handbook and the Guidelines for Forming and Operating School Management Committees and Parent-Teachers' Associations to include best practices in leader-follower relationships. School management committees and parent-teacher associations from which most followers are drawn should also be re-composed to ensure that all key groups are adequately represented. Policies and guidelines on school leadership should be revised to respond to contemporary aspirations and practices in transformational leadership. In line with this, policies and strategies targeting school leader-follower relationships should incorporate community-based indigenous knowledge on influencing leaders. There should be regular training, monitoring, and mentoring for junior high school heads, with an emphasis on involving all the key followers and the appreciation and incorporation of follower feedback in their actions.

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