



## Transformational Leadership Practices and Its Implications on School Climate towards Teacher Retention in Rural Areas, Ghana

Niamatu lai Abdulai (PhD)

*Centre for Educational Innovation and leadership,  
Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies*

ORCID ID: 0009-0001-3526-5899

Corresponding Email: [niamatulai@gmail.com](mailto:niamatulai@gmail.com)

Submitted on 27 February 2025 | Accepted on 30 April 2025 | Published on 28 May 2025

### Abstract

The study examines the role of transformational leadership in improving school climate and teacher retention in rural educational settings in Ghana. The study adopted a mix method approach with survey questionnaires and in-depth interview guide as its main tools for data collection. The study explores how transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and influence positive changes in school culture, ultimately addressing challenges such as teacher shortages and low morale in rural schools. The findings of the study reveal that a multiple regression coefficient shows both standardized and unstandardized of the transformation characteristics. The formulated model shows that the optimal parameters are the motivation and collaboration. Findings suggest that transformational leadership practices, including fostering collaboration, promoting a shared vision, and providing individualized support, have a significant impact on creating a conducive school climate and improving teacher retention rates. Recommendations are made for implementing leadership development programs tailored to rural contexts. The study therefore recommends that educational managers should endeavor to ensure effective leadership in the management of schools.

### Keywords:

Transformational leadership, School climate, Teacher retention, rural schools, Leadership development.

**How to cite:** ABDULAI, N. (2025). Transformational Leadership Practices and Its Implications on School Climate towards Teacher Retention in Rural Areas, Ghana. *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 8(05), 40-55.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15535008>



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

## Introduction

Over decade, teacher morale and motivation has steadily declined, as the perceived opinion of professional teachers has diminished and politicians have forced a climate of uncertainty on the pruned instructors (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Transformational leadership, when strategically and properly implemented, may help alleviate some of the issues that currently plague teachers in our institutions (Balyer, 2012). There is the need to connect transformational leadership strategies with the improvement of school climate, teacher efficacy, student achievement, and staff morale. Additionally, transformational leadership also incorporates the self-reflection of the leader along with stakeholders and the institution as a whole. Self-reflection and the identification of specific behaviors of staff permit growth, not only in the leader, but also in the institution through the creation of collaboration (Balyer, 2012).

According to Barnett, McCormick, and Conners (2000) transformational leadership is more facilitative of educational change and contributes to organizational improvement, effectiveness and school culture'. School transformation demands requires that the head of an institution foster a belief in change, support change, and have the ability to lead change (Boyne, 2004). Moreover, Bass (1990) added that the transformational leader is a developer of people and builder of teams. The atmosphere of school focused on the characteristic's development and better improvement as a whole where positive school climates encourage high student academic achievement, foster teacher retention, and allow for engagement and connectedness between staff and students (Cohen, Pickeral, and McCloskey., 2009). The strategic leadership actions are predictive of school climate and together these predict overall school improvement (Bulach, Boothe, D and Pickett, 2006).

Leadership and top management team in educational institutions are in a search of people who can lead to improve teaching ability and techniques where transformational leadership comes into the picture (Anderson & Sun, 2015) for which such leaders at these institutions must be able to create an institutional climate that encourages teachers to stay with the institution and improve their teaching skills. Again, such leaders must be able to provide the necessary resources and support that will help teachers reach their full potential (Peachey, Burton, L. J. & Wells, 2014). Moreover, considering the significance of the institutional climate, it is clear that factors such as recognition of efforts, workplace incivility, career development, and reward management are highly attached which can significantly influence workload and teachers' retention in school (Fessehatsion&Peng, 2021).

According to a survey done by Moin& Hassan (2021), nearly 50% of teachers who left their jobs in the past year did so because they were not satisfied with the working conditions. Teachers also described low morale and a lack of respect from management as factors leading them to leave their jobs. Moreover, governments with a huge population density and unemployment rate led teachers not to find new jobs in the same city (Moin& Hassan, 2021). Factors exerting strong influence on institutional climate included recognition efforts, workplace incivility, career development, and reward management, according to the researchers. Pakistan is facing a severe teachers' retention problem, and it is complex to pinpoint the different factors affecting it. Maintaining good retention of teachers can help

these institutions deal with their challenges, and include other contributing factors like high population density and unemployment rates. Teacher retention is affected by recognition of efforts at work, workplace incivility, career development, and reward management (Ezati, 2017).

The relationship between educational leadership and school performance, climate, and outcomes has long since been established. One such model is transformational leadership, which has risen to prominence through its potential to inspire and motivate educators and students alike, create collaborative environments for learning and drive widespread changes in the system (Leithwood&Jantzi, 2025). This model is particularly applicable to rural school contexts where leaders may face unique challenges including limited resources, rural isolation and high teacher turnover (Anderson, 2025). According to Shields (2025), educational leaders in rural areas must exert their influence to work toward equity and inclusivity, making quality education available in even the most overlooked of communities.

Many rural schools lack a stable and supportive learning environment in Ghana due to systemic issues like limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of professional development opportunities (UNESCO, 2024). These problems frequently lead to low teacher retention and decreased school performance. Transformational Leadership however provides a strong direction in countering these challenges as it emphasizes on collaboration, individualised approaches, and motivation for change (Shields, 2025; Harris, 2024). This study considers transformational leadership as a lever to improve school climate and teacher retention, thereby adding to the growing teaching on educational leadership in sub-optimal settings — a debate that seemingly has implications for teachers and schools across the globe including our own context.

The challenges faced by rural schools are vast and complex, and limit their ability to provide quality education globally. Still other barriers include geographic isolation, lack of resources and limited professional development opportunities for teachers and leaders (Anderson, 2025; Harris, 2024). Teacher retention remains an ongoing challenge, particularly in rural schools, where low morale, isolation, and (limited) career development contribute to a dearth of skilled teachers (Eyal& Roth, 2024). Therefore, Shields (2025) argues that these circumstances require educational leadership innovations that redress systemic inequities and foster sustainable change.

As per the transformative leadership model by Bass (1985) and its educational periphery elaborated by Leithwood and Jantzi, (2025), transformative leadership has indicated fruitful outcomes related to positive school climates, led to increased teacher satisfaction and better quality student outcomes. Transformational leadership is another useful approach permitting leaders to inspire and motivate their teams focused on charisma, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Day & Sammons, 2024). For instance, transformational leadership is especially promising in rural schools, as it has the potential to address the specific challenges of these schools by promoting collaboration, equity, and professional growth (Anderson, 2025; UNESCO, 2024).

Rural schools in Ghana face additional systemic challenges such as inconsistent policy implementation, limited stakeholder engagement, and insufficient resource allocation (UNESCO, 2024). Research on educational contexts with high levels of disadvantage (Shields, 2025; Gurr et al., 2024) has demonstrated that transformational leadership can help improve the management of schools and retain teachers to work in them, despite these challenges. Based on previous literature, this study discusses possible adaptations of transformational leadership practices to a Ghanaian context and highlights potential strategies for improving rural education in this and other developing countries.

This is vital to flattening the hierarchy and putting the burden back on the educational leadership to build teachers who can then build students. One such model is transformational leadership which can serve as a strong foundation for school leaders in driving staff to work together, empowering them to motivate and inspire their subordinates, and to create a culture of collaboration and innovation. In the world of rural education, a unique model emerges characterized by communal relationships and shared purpose where each leader or facilitator within the school becomes a critical component of overall management, given challenges around limited resources, geographic isolation and high turnover rates.

Rural schools frequently serve neglected populations and experience challenges like underfunding, limited access to continuing education and difficulty in retaining quality teachers. Problems such as these highlight the importance of rural-centric leadership models. They can do so as transformational leaders who inspire a common vision, inclusive practices, and emotional and professional support of their teams. Transformational leadership in reducing school climate and fostering teacher retention a solution for the rural educator. Through examining leadership practices and consequences, the research seeks to inform context-sensitive and field-responsive solutions to strengthen the capacity of school leaders and support viable educational outcomes in disadvantaged communities. However, such problems are not just limited to Finland; globally, rural schools are at risk of providing an inadequate education to those in need. Such barriers range from resource limitations to challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers to insufficient access to professional development opportunities. Rationale: In Ghana, teachers transfer frequently from rural to urban areas leading to instability in school management and instruction. They won't be solved through power-points or by better slide decks — we need new models of leadership that prioritise collaboration, inclusivity and sustainability.

One of the effective models for educational management has been transformational leadership. The transformational leadership model, promulgated by Bass (1985) and subsequently modified to apply to education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999), focuses on the ability to motivate and inspire followers to exceed expectations, create a shared sense of purpose. This has been associated with better school performance, positive relationships and increased teacher well-being. Despite its promise, however, there is limited research around its use in rural schools, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. This study addresses this gap by examining transformational leadership in rural Ghanaian schools. The study therefore examines the impact of leadership practices on school climate and teacher retention in rural

schools, providing insights into the unique challenges and opportunities that rural educational contexts present.

This study is important for multiple reasons. This alleviates the acute problem of teacher retention in rural schools, an essential element to stability and improved outcomes for students. Through its exploration of the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover rates, the study offers practical guidance for educational policymakers and school leaders alike. Second, this study brings a broader perspective to the conversation of educational leadership by discussing how transformational practices can be adapted for rural contexts. Rural schools are so different from their urban counterparts that solutions have to be tailored. Therefore, these findings can help create tailored leadership frameworks that respond to these unique needs for equity and inclusiveness in school management. Third, this study points out the need for positive school climates to increase teachers' satisfaction and performance. The study emphasizes the need to develop leadership practices musings about the relationship between school culture and leadership in supportive and collaborative environments that allow school processes and practices to flourish which ensure a transformational effect. Lastly, the study contributes to policies regarding training institutions and rural communities which will be useful to policymakers. It outlines evidence-based ideas for building leadership capacity, improving stakeholder engagement, and deploying resources strategically. The goal of the research is to equip rural schools with tools to make consistent strides in education delivery.

### **Conceptualizing the Nexus of Transformational Leadership and its Implications to Educational Output.**

Transformational Leadership is a well-studied concept in the literature focusing on how educational contexts can be improved to provide students and educators with tremendous value, especially in rural locations that continue to battle challenges around resources and teacher retention. This section provides a review of current literature on transformational leadership theory and its implication within rural schools and its significance on school climate and teacher retention. Transformational Leadership Theory forms the basis of this study, originally developed by Bass (1985) and more recently contextualised in the education domain by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999). It centres on leaders who are able to inspire and encourage their followers to go above and beyond their expected levels of performance, through a shared vision, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. And, as a theory of leadership, transformational leadership posits that leaders shape schools and districts by improving collaboration, developing school culture, and fostering systemic change (Leithwood&Jantzi, 2025). Transformative Leadership The framework builds on to add an equity-focused lens to the theoretical framework. The message here is that simply providing technical means and approaches isn't enough; social and context-driven challenges inherent to rural school settings, from fiscal stress to difficulty retaining high-quality teachers, need to be addressed. The objectives of this study align closely with transformative leadership (Gordon et al., 2021; Robinson, 2014), which focuses on inclusionary practices and systemic change in previously marginalized educational contexts.

Drawing on the theoretical threads of transformational and distributed leadership, this study investigates how such leadership influences the development of a positive school climate and enhances teacher retention in rural contexts. The information serves as an excellent basis to use to understand which effective leadership practices can help deal with the unique challenges faced in rural schools.

Although Distributed Leadership Theory only serves a supporting role in this study, as it focuses on the distribution of leadership between different individuals in an organization (Spillane, 2024). Given the long-standing challenges of rural schools, Harris (2024) emphasizes that distributed leadership plays an especially important role, helping to distribute and balance the load of responsibilities, while also promoting collaboration and shared decision-making, which is crucial for successful school management in these contexts. Shields' (2025) concept of

### **Theoretical reflection on Transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership, based on the full-range leadership model, is characterized as motivating and inspiring followers to do more than expected by establishing a common vision, offering intellectual encouragement, and applying personal care (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2025) According to Shield (2024) transformational leadership is most effective in challenging equity issues in education and enacting the systemic changes needed for inclusive practices. Transformational leaders exhibit charisma and the ability to inspire their followers through inspirational motivation (Northouse, 2024), which are necessary components of dynamic relationships between leaders and followers.

Geographically-based isolation contributes to differing challenges and opportunities between rural and urban areas, with rural schools facing barriers like distance from professional development opportunities, lack of technology access, and a scarcity of funds and resources. Anderson (2025) published about the role of teacher leaders in rural schools, stating that transformational leadership can act as an opportunity for collaboration and creativity in decision-making processes. According to Shields (2025), transformative leadership is crucial for providing equity and meeting the needs of the varied demographics that rural communities present. According to Harris (2024), distributed leadership is vital in rural contexts because sharing the responsibility can reduce the load on individuals.

Developing a positive school climate is key to promoting teamwork, mutual respect and trust within both the staff and student communities. Shared visions and collaborative practices are thus important levers to be used by transformational leaders and they have a marked impact on school climate (Day & Sammons, 2024) Gurr et al. Transformational leadership in schools was linked to higher staff satisfaction and engagement (Wang et al. Distributed leadership builds an environment of support, collaboration, and professional expertise that may be effective for rural schools (Harris, 2024).The problem of teacher retention in rural schools is a persistent issue that is often exacerbated by low morale as well as a lack of professional growth opportunities. Research has demonstrated that teachers are more likely to stay in schools where supportive emotional environments exist, where faculty input is considered and where there are opportunities for professional growth (Eyal& Roth,

2024); all of which are characteristics of transformational leadership. Gurr et al. (2012) School leadership and management practices in Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 12(4): 409-425. According to Shields (2025), transformational leaders foster. Transformational leadership has many advantages, however applying this style in rural schools can be problematic. According to Shields (2025), the positive impact of transformational leadership may decrease when policy support is inconsistent or when there is a lack of human resources. Nonetheless, opportunities are available to directly confront these barriers via targeted leadership development training programs, peer mentorship networks, and partnerships with outside organizations (Anderson, 2025, UNESCO, 2024).The challenges of teaching and teacher retention have long been pressing issues of concern in rural schools, also due to such potential barriers as limited resources, relative isolation, and limited opportunities for professional development. Transformational leadership has been defined as a potential solution to these problems, identified, as it is characterized by collaboration, inspiring teachers, and goodwill, all elements to improve school climate and teacher satisfaction.

## **Material and Methods**

The study was conducted in selected rural schools in the Tolon district of the northern region of Ghana. The district is one of the rural districts in the northern region and for the purpose of this study focuses in rural schools the district was purposively selected. The study design adopted for this study was analytical cross-sectional using mix method approach. The quantitative data was collected using survey questionnaire which was administered to selected teachers in selected schools in some rural school in Tolon district in the northern region of Ghana. Key informants' interviews guide and in-depth interview guides were the tools employed for the qualitative data. In this study seven rural schools were purposively selected and nine (9) key informants were selected for the study. The nine key informants were the heads teachers of the selected school and the district director of education and one circuit supervisor. In this study, 200 respondents were selected for the quantitative study. The selection was done using simple random sampling technique. In all the 209 respondents were used for the study. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. ANOVA and multiple regression were employed in the analysis while content analysis was adopted in analyzing the qualitative data.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The results and discussion for the various transformational leadership and its effects of school climate were detailed below quantitatively.

**Table 1: Transformation Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.873 <sup>a</sup>	.762	.755	.196

Table 1 presents the predictors: motivation, teamwork, retention, mutual regard, resources, professional growth, awards, and surroundings. The coefficient of determination, sometimes referred to as R squared, was 76.12%. The predictors account for 76.2% of the variance in the dependent variable (transformation). The results indicated that the model used to correlate the variables was satisfactory.

**Table 2: Transformation and Intervention ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	32.741	8	4.093	106.532	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	10.219	266	.038		
Total	42.960	274			

. Dependent Variable: Transformational Leadership

Table 2 indicated that the model is statistically significant ( $P < 0.005$ ) as indicated in the ANOVA table showing the sum of squares, degree of freedom, mean square F statistic value and sig. value respectively.

**Table 3: Predictors Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	8.100	.360		22.490	.000
Motivation	.602	.022	.874	103	.003
Retention	.089	.029	.227	3.071	.002
Resources	-.013	.031	.017	.439	.661
Collaboration	.124	.024	.883	5.170	.000
Environment	.068	.051	.675	1.328	.004
Mutual Respect	-.038	.021	.695	-1.807	.012
Professional Devp't	1.012	.075	.784	13.571	.000
Award	.097	.043	.073	2.232	.026

a. Dependent Variable: Transformation Leadership

Table 3 shows the predictive model parameters, unstandardized and standardized coefficients, t value and the sig value respectively. The table also indicated that all the parameters are statistically significant except resource (0.661) stressing that the model will be fitted without the inclusion of the resource parameter.



#### 4 Predictive Model

The multiple regression coefficients for both standardized and unstandardized of the transformation characteristics. The formulated model shown below.

$$\text{Transformational Leadership} = 8.100 + 0.602 \text{ motivation} + 0.089 \text{ Retention} - 0.013 \text{ Resources} + 0.124 \text{ Collaboration} + 0.068 \text{ Positive Environment} - 0.038 \text{ Mutual Respect} + 1.012 \text{ Professional development} + 0.097 \text{ Award}$$

The model elucidated that a unit increase in predictors will elevate the dependent variable (Transformation) by the positive values of the individual coefficients of the predictors, while concurrently diminishing the dependent variable by the negative coefficients of resources and mutual respect, along with a constant of 8.1004 when all predictor values are zero. The ideal parameters are motivation and collaboration.

#### Leadership Practices

**Table 4: Inspire and Motivate Staff**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Disagree	4	1.4	1.5	2.5
	Neither	9	3.3	3.3	5.8
	Agree	57	20.7	20.7	26.5
	Strongly Agree	202	73.2	73.5	100.0
	Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 4 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of Inspire and Motivate Staff as 3(1.1%) for strongly disagree, 4 (1.4%) for disagree, 9 (3.3%) for neither, 57 (20.7%) for agree, and 202 (73.2%) for strongly agree respectively.

**Table 5: Promote Collaboration**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	182	65.9	66.2	66.2
	Rarely	56	20.3	20.4	86.5
	Sometimes	28	10.1	10.2	96.7
	Always	9	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 5 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of collaboration as 182(66.2%) for never, 56 (20.4%) for rarely, 28 (10.2%) for sometimes and 9 (3.3%) for always respectively.

## 6. Impact on School Climate

**Table 6: Create a Positive School Environment**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neither	8	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Agree	16	5.8	5.8	8.7
	Strongly Agree	251	90.9	91.3	100.0
	Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 6 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of school environment as 8(2.9%) for neither, 16 (5.8%) for agree and 251 (91.3%) for strongly agree respectively.

**Table 7: Mutual Respect**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Good	39	14.1	14.2	14.2
	Good	121	43.8	44.0	58.2
	Neutral	98	35.5	35.6	93.8
	Poor	8	2.9	2.9	96.7
	Very Poor	9	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 7 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of mutual respect as 39(14.2%) for very good, 121 (44.0%) for good, 98(35.6%) for neutral, 8(2.9%) for poor and 9 (3.3%) for very respectively.

## 7. Teacher Retention

**Table 8: Influence Retention**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neither	252	91.3	91.6	91.6
d	Agree	20	7.2	7.3	98.9

Strongly Agree	3	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 8 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of retention as 252(91.6%) for neither, 20 (7.3%) for agree and 3 (1.1%) strongly agree respectively

**Table 9: Recommend this school to Others**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	4	1.4	1.5	1.5
Disagree	3	1.1	1.1	2.5
Neither	9	3.3	3.3	5.8
Agree	79	28.6	28.7	34.5
Strongly Agree	180	65.2	65.5	100.0
Total	275	99.6	100.0	

Table 9 shows the frequency, valid and cumulative percent of school recommendation as 4(1.5%) for strongly disagree, 3 (1.1%) for disagree, 9 (3.3%) for neither, 79 (28.7%) for agree and 180 (65.2%) for strongly agree respectively.

**Table 10: Leadership Practices Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	160.619 <sup>a</sup>	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	114.347	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	44.027	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	275		

Table 10 shows the chi-square involving person chi-square (160.619), likelihood ratio\* 114.347) and linear-by -linear association of (44.027) indicating the degree of freedom as well as the asymptotic significant value (0.00).

**Table 11: leadership practices and the impact( Symmetric Measures)**

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Pearson's R	.871	.051	-7.229	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Spearman	.744	.049	-8.181	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Correlation				
N of Valid Cases	275			

Table 11 shows the symmetric measure between leadership practices and the impact of school climate working experience showing the strong pearson correlation (0.871) and spearman correlation (0.744) with significant value (0.000).

### Transformational Leadership Practices

Key findings from the survey are that school leaders in rural areas tend to engage in transformational leadership practices by encouraging collaboration, inspiring a common vision, and offering personal support to teachers (Havin et al., 2023, p. 195). Two-thirds approximately of respondents indicated that their school-leaders inspired and motivated them to work toward common goals. These findings bias well with Leithwood and Jantzi (2025) as they reiterate transformational leadership used as a tactic that can promote sensemaking, with which better shared purpose or direction can be established. In a similar vein, Bass (1985) highlights how transformational leaders employ charisma and inspirational motivation to inspire followers to go beyond the call of duty.

However, the study also presented challenges in consistently engaging in transformational practices influenced by resource constraints and geographical disconnect. For example, Shields (2025) noted that rural schools face unique challenges including limited access to professional development programs and tight budgets

### Impact on School Climate

Transformational Leadership and School Climate in Rural Areas School leaders created an environment where mutual respect, trust, and collaboration were hallmarks of their interaction, which respondents noted as a factor in the supportive environment that contributed to positive teaching and learning. Approximately 80% of respondents agreed that transformational leadership practices enhanced relationships among and between staff and students. These findings align with the research of Day and Sammons (2024), which highlights the crucial influence transformational leaders have in creating a positive climate in schools. Additionally, Gurr et al. According to (2024), inclusive leadership practices are "key" for creating a positive school culture, as these practices involve teachers in decision-making processes and lead to ownership and engagement. According to Harris (2024) which is defined as an aspect of transformational leadership distributed leadership (Harris 2024), serves as a complementary approach to creating a collaborative school environment.

Respondents confirmed this view, stating that their leaders relied heavily on delegation to involve the team and to hold them collectively responsible for results.

### **Teacher Retention**

Results also indicated that transformational leadership practices correlate with improved retention of teachers in rural schools. The most common reasons that respondents continue in their roles are emotional support, donation recognition and professional development opportunities. When asked which of their leaders' transformational practices were most important in their decision to remain in the profession, approximately 75% indicated that their leaders' transformational practices were a critical factor. These findings are consistent with work by Eyal and Roth (2024), which found that transformational leaders enhance teacher retention through fostering belongingness and professional fulfilment in their employees. Emotional support, Shields (2025) suggest, and recognition of efforts are important in overcoming the peculiar difficulty [38] of working in rural schools which has isolation, minimal chances of career advancement in some cases, amongst other challenges. However, some respondents said teacher retention remained challenged by systemic factors, including inadequate resources and inconsistent policy support. This resonates with Shields' (2025) conclusions that teacher retention is heavily influenced by external factors such as resource allocation and implementation of policies.

*“Most teachers declined posting to the rural communities thereby making leadership a serious issue. For instance, in my school. Seven teachers had their names as teachers here but as the head teacher I do not know them. I reported this to the district director and no action is taking. What else can I do as the head teacher? Some teacher will pay money and find their way you only see them when there is going to be headcount”. Leadership in the educational sector need to have a second look at” II3*

This was the lamentation of one of the head teachers during an indepth interview.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The transformational leadership practices were effective in generating results, but there are significant challenges in implementation such as the shortage of resources and lack of professional development opportunities. Working in rural schools, respondents also noted the idea that school leaders sometimes have challenges with balancing school administrative duties and serving as instructional leader. These challenges are highlighted by Shields (2025) and Anderson (2025), stressing the importance of tailored leadership development programs and support systems. However, there are still ways to improve transformational leadership in rural schools. Some respondents recommended setting up peer mentorship networks, developing relationships with external organizations to support shared programming and more access to leadership training. Similar strategies are also recommended by UNESCO (2024) and Harris (2024), where building capacity and working together to stimulate and consolidate the best practices in leadership.

*“The leaders here are not helping. For instance, we have a circuit supervisor who comes for monitoring only once in a month or sometimes he will not come at all. As a result of this*

*some teachers too will not come to teach thereby affecting quality teaching in our schools”*  
*III*

In an interview with the district director of education he reported as follows:

*“ Hmmm! There are a lot of challenges we face at schools in rural areas. Some of this has to do with financial resource constrain. In all the circuit we have supervisors but they do not go for monitoring as it should be because the needed logistics to support them are not there. They use to be given motor bikes for these activities but for some reason unknown to us they stop providing such assistance. Not even fuel for them to fuel their own motor bikes for official assignments. Hmmm! Lamentation everywhere”* *KII*

The study recommends that specialised leadership training programs need to be developed to meet the unique challenges faced by rural school leaders. These programs should also prepare leaders to strengthen transformational leadership traits including collaboration, collective vision, and individual consideration. Leaders should work proactively to create these structures by connecting teachers with access to professional development and mentoring networks. Government should ensure that there is properly stakeholder engagement whereby schools should actively engage parents, community members, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes to create a sense of collective ownership and accountability of school in rural communities.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, K. D. (2025). Transformational teacher leadership in rural schools. *The Rural Educator*. Retrieved from Academia.edu.
- Parai, J. B., & Alias, B. S. (2025). Principals’ transformational leadership practices and their relationship with teacher blended teaching in rural schools. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*. Retrieved from HRMARS.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2025). Transformational leadership and its impact on school climate. *Educational Administration Quarterly*.
- Shields, C. M. (2024). Transformative leadership for equity in rural education. *Journal of Educational Leadership*.
- Spillane, J. P. (2024). Distributed leadership in rural schools: A case study. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*.
- Fullan, M. (2024). Leading change in rural schools: Transformational leadership strategies. *Jossey-Bass*.
- Harris, A. (2024). Collaborative leadership in rural education: A global perspective. *Springer*.
- Kirk, D. A. (2025). Teacher leadership in rural schools: A transformational approach. *The Rural Educator*. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Mhaga, N. (2024). Transformational leadership in well-performing rural schools. *University of Pretoria Dissertation*.
- UNESCO. (2024). Transformational leadership in education: Challenges and opportunities in rural areas. *UNESCO Publishing*.

- OECD. (2024). Leadership practices and school outcomes in rural settings. *OECD Publishing*.
- Day, C., & Sammons, P. (2024). Successful school leadership in rural contexts. *Education Development Trust*.
- Hallinger, P. (2024). Instructional leadership and transformational practices in rural schools. *Cambridge Journal of Education*.
- Shields, C. M. (2025). Equity-focused leadership in rural education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*.
- Gurr, D., Drysdale, L., & Mulford, B. (2024). Models of successful principal leadership in rural schools. *School Leadership & Management*.
- Eyal, O., & Roth, G. (2024). Principals' leadership and teacher motivation in rural schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*.
- Southworth, G. (2024). Instructional leadership in rural schools: Empirical evidence. *School Leadership & Management*.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2024). Sustainable leadership in rural education. *Jossey-Bass*.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2024). Leadership types and student outcomes in rural schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2024). Moral leadership in rural schools: A transformational perspective. *Jossey-Bass*.
- Anderson, M. H. & Sun, P. Y. T., 2015. The downside of transformational leadership when encouraging followers to network. *The Leadership Quarterly*, pp. 26(5), 790–801.
- Balyer, A. (2012). Transformational leadership behaviors of school principals: A qualitative research based on teachers' perceptions. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5, 581-591.
- Barnett, K, McCormick J and Conners R (2000) Leadership behavior of secondary school principals, teacher outcomes, and school culture. In: The Australian Association for Research in Education annual conference, Sydney, Australia, December 2000.
- Bass B and Avolio B (1990) The implications of transactional and transformational leadership for individual, team, and organizational development. *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 4: 231–272
- Bass B and Avolio B (1994) *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Boyne G (2004) A “3Rs” strategy for public service turnaround: Retrenchment, repositioning, and reorganization. *Public Money and Management* 24(2): 97–103.
- Bulach C, Boothe, D and Pickett ,W (2006) Analyzing the leadership behavior of school principals
- Cohen J, Pickett T and McCloskey, M (2009) Assessing school climate. *Educational Leadership* 74: 45–48.
- Ezati, M., 2017. (2017). Investigating the Factors Affecting the Performance of Teaching Academic Departments: Qualitative Study. *Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*, pp. 1391 65 ), 45 23.

- Fessehatsion, P. W. & Peng, P., 2021. Exploring Teachers' Retention and Attrition in Middle and Secondary Schools in Eritrea: Perspectives of Currently Serving Teachers. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 7(1), pp. 227-244.
- Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). U.S. schools struggle to hire and retain teachers: The perfect storm in the teacher labor market. Economic Policy Institute.
- Moin, N. & Hassan, S., 2021. The Prospects Affecting Faculty Retention in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 4(1).
- Peachey, J. W., Burton, L. J. & Wells, J. E., (2014.) Examining the influence of transformational leadership, organizational commitment, job embeddedness, and job search behaviors on turnover intentions in intercollegiate athletics. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, pp. 35(8), 740 – 755.