

# Educational Leadership Challenges And Its Resilience In Secondary Schools Of Kellem Wollega Zone, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

A research study was conducted to assess educational leadership challenges and its resilience in secondary schools of Kellem Wollega Zone. The aim of the study is to identify challenges and suggest resilience strategies to overcome the prevalence educational leadership challenges to achieve education quality in secondary schools. The study involved 357 samples selected which include 48 education leaders and 309 secondary school teachers. Descriptive survey research design along with simple random sampling technique was used. Study revealed that high lawlessness behavior in the schools, students' disciplinary problems, and strongly influenced school aims by pressures from the external environment particularly from the expectations of the government political environment and lacks leadership commitment in coping challenging situation. The researcher intensely ratifying those educational leaders to have professional training and professional computation must be the way to bring education leadership to power without any external pressures of superiors. One of the keys to being effective educational leaders in changing situation is the application of the necessary developing leadership resilience strategy. Evolving having connectivity and good communication with community, optimistic attitude towards followers with good ethical behavior, compassionate, kind and elegant, evenhanded as well as flexible and adaptive leadership, in this regards leaders can cope up with challenging or turbulent circumstances.

**Keywords:** Leadership Challenges, Resilient Leaders, Resilience, Ethiopia.

## Introduction

Education leadership has been broadly known as a vital element in determining the success of educational organizations especially during turbulent times when organizations are suffering stress when undergoing change due to evolving circumstances. According to Kalargyrou, V. et al. (2012) leaders in management education face diverse challenges in today's competitive and changing environment. Evolving demands from superiors, financial challenges, faculty, and students create a turbulent environment in which administrators must thrive.

Leaders and organization often face challenges and crises that test the strength and flexibility of their systems and resources. Southwick, F. S., et al., (2017) stated that successful leadership has always been more difficult during periods of rapid change but the unique stressors facing organizations throughout the world today has caused a renewed interest in studying personal and organizational behaviors with a focus on what constitutes effective and adaptive leadership. Interestingly, some leaders and organizations not only survive, but also thrive in these situations while others falter or collapse under the stress of change.

In recent time in Ethiopia, quality education issues and students' academic performance in secondary schools has been a major concern of the society, community, parents and teachers, which can be caused from leadership competencies and different situational challenges. Misgana T. (2017) has stated that leadership at all levels of the education system is now being recognized as a viable approach in meeting the critical need of bringing quality education and improving student achievement. According to Aina (cited in Abdulrasheed, O., & Bello, A. S. 2015), some secondary school principals are lacking leadership competencies, resulting in low quality of instruction, indiscipline among staff and students.

As Tyler, C. (2014) has specified that school leaders have been ethically challenged to make difficult decision while coping with high stakes pressures from political leaders and the public, along with school accountability. This also indicates that deceptive from political leaders on the regular operation of educational leadership and their recruitment is a serious observable challenge of educational leadership.

As the Covid-19 pandemic spread around the world, educational leadership faced with the multiple inconveniences in educational activities, which was highly affected the educational qualities. Leading an educational organization through the coronavirus crisis has been causes instants of frustration and discouragement on the leadership. The coronavirus pandemic is rapidly redefining schooling and leadership. By adopting an adaptive approach to leadership, school leaders can build resiliency and capacity for their school communities to weather future disruptions cause by the pandemic (Bagwell, J., 2020). The survival of an organization during crisis is dependent on the resilience of its members as well as its leadership (Teo, et al., 2017).

In addition to this in Kellem Wollega Zone, social, political instability and security issues are reasonably challenging all levels of educational

leadership in discharging their professional responsibility. Sungtong, E. (2007) has indicated that the unrested situations lead to dilemma for teachers and leaders. They are concerned with the quality of their students' learning, teaching, and administration. At the same time, they are concerned with safety to their Students and themselves.

Consequently, an assessment of educational leadership challenges and educational leaders' resilience strategy in higher educational institutions is very important; so that effective measures should be taken to improve their working conditions and improves their quality leadership of education.

### **Objectives**

**General Objective:** The general objective of this research was an assessment of educational leadership challenges and its resilience in secondary Schools of Kellem Wollega Zone.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify the challenges faced by educational leadership in Secondary Schools of Kellem Wollega zone.
- To recognize the functions of leadership in secondary schools of the Zone.
- To identify and suggest resilience strategies (viable measures) to overcome the prevalence educational leadership challenges in Secondary Schools of the Zone.

### **Materials and Method**

Both quantitative and qualitative data was used and analyzed accordingly. Mixed method of research approach (quantitative and qualitative methods) was used so that it can be helpful to come up with well validated and substantiated findings (Creswell, 2003). The study population was 1980 zonal secondary schools teachers and educational leaders.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

Multistage sampling technique was employed to select the samples. It was employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. In multistage cluster sampling, the researcher chooses a sample in two or more stages because either the researchers cannot easily identify the population or the population is extremely large (Creswell, John W. 2002).

The researcher was carefully plan sample and sampling techniques of the participants of the study. Dawson, C. (2002) has stated that if the sample has not been chosen very carefully, the results of such surveys can be misleading.

### **Instrument of Data Collection**

The researcher employed both open and closed ended Likert scale type of questionnaires. The questionnaires were developed by researcher and administered to assess the challenges of

leadership and its resilience approach. Furthermore available literature concerning leadership challenges and leadership resilience approach were assessed.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The questionnaire distribution, filling and collecting process was held after creating an awareness regarding the objectives and significance of the study based on consent without any pressure. The information given was kept confidential.

### **Data Processing and Analyses**

The collected data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23. Particularly, descriptive statistics such as frequency, descriptive and cross tabulation was used to compute personal information of respondents, challenges of leadership, leadership function and resilience strategies.

The data was collected from the total of 357, male 297 and female 60 including educational leaders 48 (13.4%) and teachers 309 (86.6%). It indicated that 83.2% of sample respondents were males and only 16.8 % of the samples were females.

## **Results**

### **Part I: General Information of Study Participants**

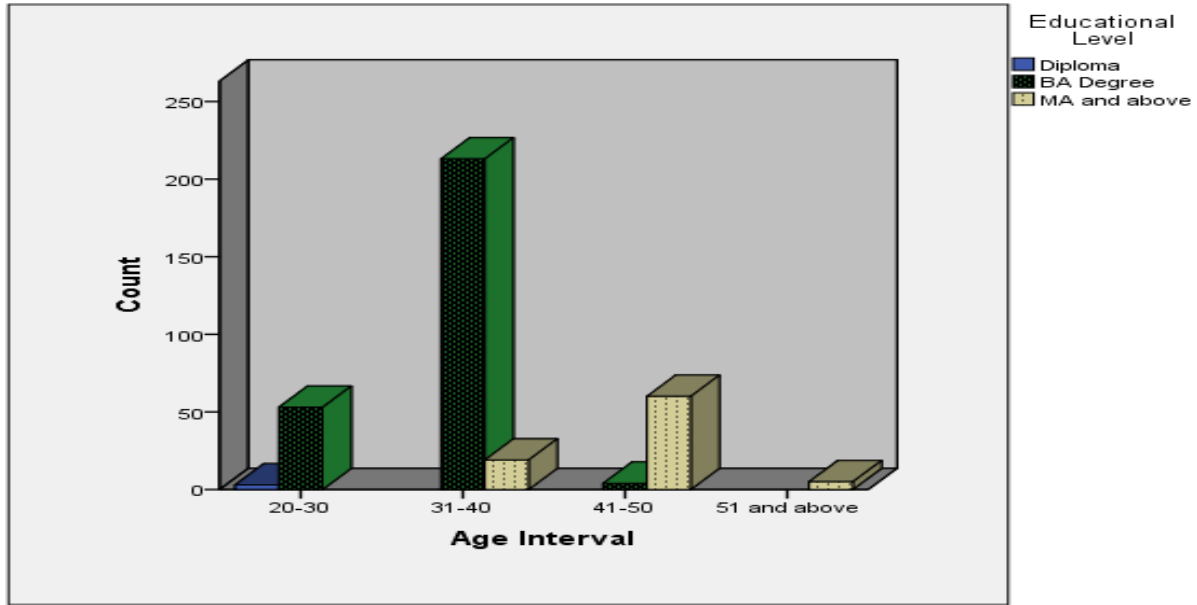


Fig. 1 Educational level by age interval of respondents

**Table1: Educational background leadership respondents (n=48)**

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Educational Leadership	7	14.2
School Leadership	14	29.2
Educational Leadership and Management	3	6.3
Educational Planning and Management	2	4.2
Other	22	45.8

Regarding to educational background the majorities 45.8% of respondents of educational leadership have not specialized in educational leadership and management related fields of study.

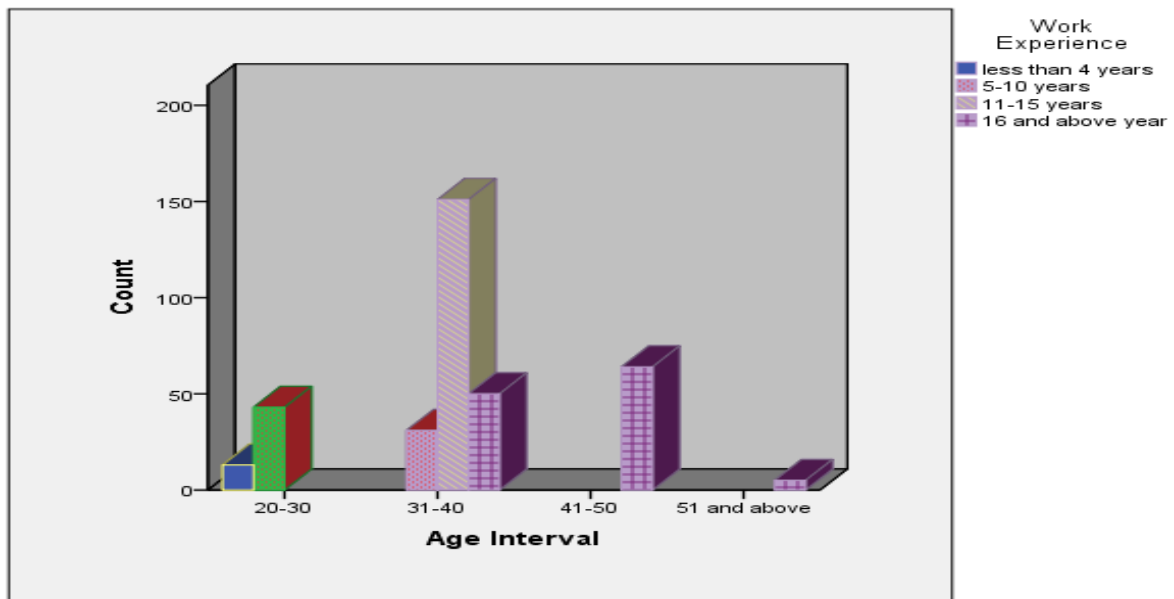


Fig. 2: Work experience and age interval correspondence

**Table 2: Ways of educational leaders coming to position (n=48)**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
1. Appointment	3	6.3
2. Professionally competition	38	79.2
3. Timely delegation	5	10.4
4. Other	2	4.2

As figure 3 depicted that the most educational supervisors' daily attention is dealing with both educational and political issues and district

educational office head dealing with educational, social and political issues of the community.

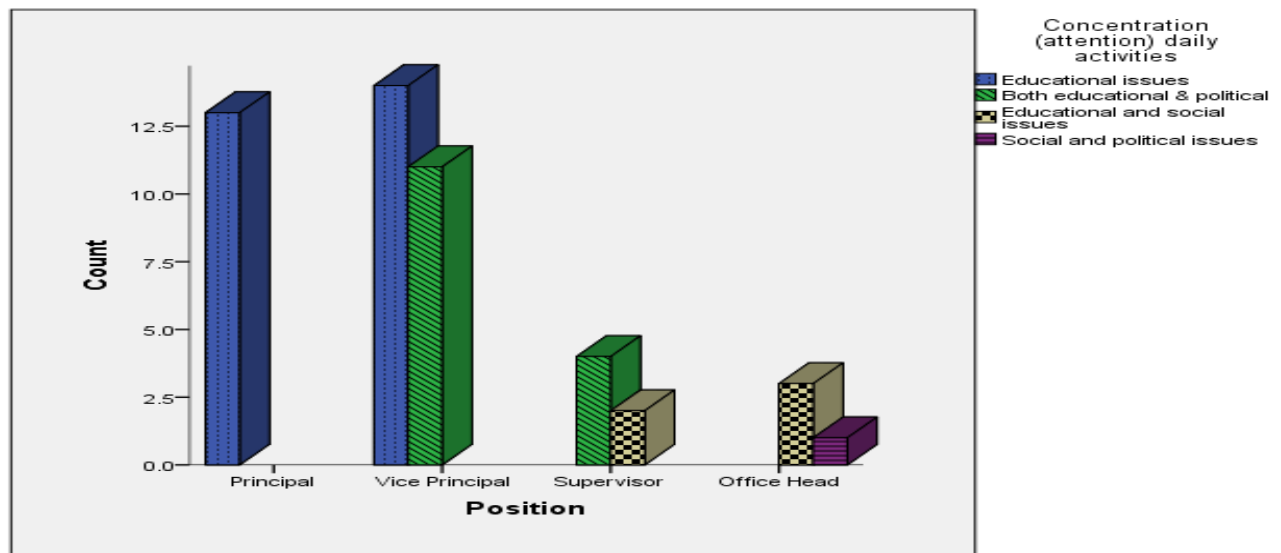


Fig. 3: Concentration of Educational Leaders in their daily activities in line with their position

**Part 2: Challenges of Educational Leadership in discharging their Professional duty**

**Table 3: External Pressures (n=357)**

Variable	Response	F	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have no any pressure from external management bodies in my educational leadership	SD	63	17.6	2.98	1.316
	D	84	23.5		
	UD	46	12.9		
	A	125	35.0		
	SA	39	10.9		
I can absolutely make any difficult decision freely at school/office level without any external pressure	SD	37	10.4	3.14	1.214
	D	90	25.2		
	UD	57	16.0		
	A	133	37.3		
	SA	40	11.2		

Regarding to challenges of educational leadership that can influence them by external pressure, the study shows that the respondents were agree that they have no any pressure from external management bodies in their educational leadership issue by 35.0 %. However 23.5% of respondents disagree, 17.6% strongly disagree, and 12.9% undecided and 10.9% of respondents were strongly agreed.

Data shows that the majority 37.3% of respondents agree with that they can absolutely make any difficult decision freely at school/office level without any external pressure. But 25.2% of respondents disagree, 16 % of respondents undecided. Few numbers of respondents strongly disagree 10.4 % and strongly agree 11.2%.

**Table 4: Staffs and students misbehaving (n=357)**

Variable	Response	F	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am challenged with the staff complaint (grievance) and dis obedience.	SD	37	10.4	3.09	1.199
	D	82	23.0		
	UD	97	27.2		
	A	93	26.1		
	SA	48	13.4		
I am challenged with students' miss behavioral problems	SD	17	4.8	3.58	1.167
	D	65	18.2		
	UD	51	14.3		
	A	141	39.5		
	SA	83	23.2		
I believed that there is high lawlessness behavior in our school or District	SD	53	14.8	3.07	1.312
	D	83	23.2		
	UD	60	16.8		
	A	108	30.3		
	SA	53	14.8		

Regarding to the challenge with the staff complaint (grievance) and dis obedience, data shows that majority of respondents 27.2% were rates as undecided, 26.1% were agree, 23% disagree, 13.4% strongly agree and 10.4% strongly disagree with mean value of 3.09.

Concerning to problems of students miss behaving the majority of respondents agree with 39.5% and strongly agree with 23.2%. However less number of respondents were disagree with 18.2%, undecided

with 14.3% and strongly disagree 4.8% with mean value of 3.58.

As the analysis of data indicated 30.3% of respondents were agreed with believe that there is high lawlessness behavior in their school and 23.2% of them was disagree. 16.8% of respondents were unable to decided either there is high lawlessness behavior in our school or not. But there are equal number of respondents 14.8% rated as strongly agree and strongly disagree. The mean value of the item is 3.07.

**Table 5: Leaders Commitment (n=357)**

Variable	Response	F	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
I believed that our teaching staffs have lacks of committed to their duty	SD	73	20.4	2.76	1.307
	D	100	28.0		
	UD	64	17.9		
	A	81	22.7		
	SA	39	10.9		
Our leadership lacks leadership commitment in challenging a challenging situation	SD	68	19.0	3.00	1.340
	D	70	19.6		
	UD	60	16.8		
	A	113	31.7		
	SA	46	12.9		

Majority 28% of respondents were disagreed and 22.7% were agreed with lack of staff's commitment to their duty. However, 20.4% of respondents were strongly disagreed, 17.9% were undecided and 10.9% were strongly agreed with mean values of 2.76.

Regarding to leadership lacks leadership commitment in challenging a challenging situation, the majority of respondents 31.7% were agree, 19.6% were disagree, 19% strongly disagree, 16.8% were undecided and 12.9% of respondents were strongly agree with mean value of 3.00.

### Part 3: Leadership Functions

**Table 6: Leadership Functions (n=357)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Shared vision, objectives and strategies	3.5429	1.13874
Inspiration	3.1912	1.23476
Coaching	3.5854	1.05584
Energizing	3.2248	1.25017
Empowering	3.6737	1.12599

Mean < 1.5 strongly disagree,  $1.5 \leq \text{mean} < 2.5$  disagree,  $2.5 \leq \text{mean} < 3.5$  undecided,  $3.5 \leq \text{mean} < 4.5$  agree,  $\text{mean} \geq 4.5$  strongly agree.

Regarding to Shared vision, strategies and objectives many questions have been asked. Accordingly, the data indicates that respondents agree with the mean value of 3.5429.

Staff inspiration is one of the functions of the education leadership. In this regard the respondents have shown that it is not able decide to those questions that encourages teachers and staff by using methods of encouragement with mean value of 3.1912. Concerning to education leaders offers constant coaching and guidance to the staff in their

operations and their collegiality approach with their staff members the respondents shown their agreement with mean value of 3.5854.

Data shown that, the respondents were unable to decide with the energizing function of educational leadership the participative approach of leadership in the decision making process of academic issues and best appreciation gain from closed leadership with mean value of 3.2248. In the empowerment of staff issues raised and respondents were revealed their agreement with mean value 3.6737.

### Part 4: Leadership Resilience Strategy





**Table: 7 Communications and Staff Development**

Variable	Response	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deploying robust communication and family engagement strategies in the school affairs	SD	24	6.7	3.37	1.067
	D	47	13.2		
	UD	102	28.6		
	A	142	39.8		
	SA	42	11.8		
Leadership attempts to care for staff and build their capacity through instructional leadership and professional learning activities	SD	20	5.6	3.38	1.132
	D	71	19.9		
	UD	75	21.0		
	A	136	38.1		
	SA	55	15.4		

Data shown that majority 39.8% of respondents were agreed and 28.6% unable to decide with educational leadership practices strong communication with community and uses their engagement in the school affairs. Least number of respondents 13.2%, 11.8% and 6.7% were disagreed, strongly agree and strongly disagree respectively.

Regarding to leadership attempts to care for staff and build their capacity through instructional leadership and professional learning activities, the larger number of respondents shown their agreement by 38.1% and undecided by 21.0%, with whereas 19.9%, 15.4% and 5.6% were shown their disagreement, strongly agreement and strongly disagreement respectively.

**Table 8: Leaders- Staff approach and Staff Encouragement**

Variable	Response	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational Leaders approached their staff with good ethical behavior, compassionately, kindly and gracefully	SD	12	3.4	3.67	1.021
	D	37	10.4		
	UD	81	22.7		
	A	154	43.1		
	SA	73	20.4		
Leaders encourage adaptive practices to deal with different situations and risk-taking solutions	SD	21	5.9	3.51	1.062
	D	40	11.2		
	UD	86	24.1		
	A	157	44.0		
	SA	53	14.8		
Leaders embrace and promote creativity and innovation as	SD	18	5.0	3.40	1.194
	D	79	22.1		
	UD	81	22.7		

part of values to constantly improve changes.	A	101	28.3
	SA	78	21.8

Data indicates that majority of the respondents were agreed by 43.1% with that educational leaders approaches their staff with good ethical behavior, compassionately, kindly and gracefully, with mean value of 3.67. But, 22.7% of respondents were unable to decide either their agreement or disagreement and 20.4% of participants shown their strong agreement. Least number of participants 10.4% were disagrees and 3.4% were strongly disagreed.

Data also indicates that majority 44% participants were shown their agreement that educational

leadership encourage adaptive practices to deal with different situations and risk-taking solutions with mean value of 3.51 of total participants.

Data shows that majority of participants 28.3 agreed that educational leaders embrace and promote creativity and innovation as part of values to constantly improve changes with mean value of 3.4 of total participants. All most equal number of respondents 22.7%, 22.1% and 21.8% was unable to decide, disagree and strongly agree. Least number of participants 5% were strongly disagreed.

**Table 9: Education Leaders Leadership Strategy**

Variable	Response	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership changes its leading style based on the challenging situation to make adaptable to changes	SD	31	8.7	3.46	1.207
	D	50	14.0		
	UD	71	19.9		
	A	133	37.3		
	SA	72	20.2		
The leaders demonstrate sustained effort to complete tasks to achieve schools objectives	SD	15	4.2	3.61	1.082
	D	51	14.3		
	UD	61	17.1		
	A	160	44.8		
	SA	70	19.6		
Leaders believed that their leadership treat their staff fairly (differently but equally)	SD	18	5.0	3.75	1.087
	D	32	9.0		
	UD	61	17.1		
	A	155	43.4		

As data shows majority of participants shown their agreement by 37.3% and strongly agreement by 20.2% for issues raised as educational leadership changes its leading style based on the challenging situation to make adaptive to changes with mean score of 3.46. Below average of respondents were rated as 19.9%, 14.0% and 8.7% undecided, disagree and strongly disagree respectively

In relation to leadership demonstrate sustained effort to complete tasks to achieve schools objectives, majority 44.8% of participants were agree and 19.6% were strongly agree. Whereas 17.1% were unable to decided, 14.3% disagree and 4.2% were strongly disagreed. The mean value score was 3.61.

Moreover the respondents were asked to rate the fairness of educational leadership to treats staff differently but equally, majority 43.4% of respondents were agree and 25.5% were strongly agree with mean value score of 3.75. However, least number of respondents 17.1%, 9% and 5% were unable to decide, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

### Discussion

This part was deals with discussion of the results found with respect to the research questions described in the introductory part in line with the existing literature.

In this study 83.2% of sample respondents were males and only 16.8% of the samples were females. The majority, 86.6% of participants was secondary school teachers and only 13.3% of participants were educational leaders. Data revealed that 65% of participants were found within age interval of 31-40. This shows that most teachers and leadership are at an age when they are critical and productive. But according to Assessment, C. (2016) indicates that average teacher age ranges from 36 years in Singapore to 49 years in Italy.

Data shows that majority, 75.6% of the respondents were qualified with BA degree. The larger number

of respondents in the age interval of 31-40 was BA and MA degree holders.

Regarding to specialization the majority, 45.8% of respondents of educational leadership has not specialized with educational leadership and management related fields of study. This indicates that most education leaders have not learned the lesson of leadership.

Regarding to ways of coming to position of leading the educational organization majority 79.2% of educational leaders were coming to the leading position through professionally competition. This shows that timely delegation and appointment is other option in which educational leaders comes position. Gurmu, T. G. (2020) has shown in his findings that the denial of principal ship to professional graduates and political affiliation lens are scenarios that inform principals' selection for leadership positions.

The daily attention of school principals is mainly educational issues. However, as the study revealed that mostly educational supervisors dealing with both educational and political issues and district educational office head dealing with educational, social and political issues of the community. A school supervisor is an administrator who oversees the daily actions of schools and directs the training activities of the organization.

### Challenges of Educational Leadership in discharging their professional duty

Regarding to challenges of educational leadership, the study shows that they have no any pressure from external management bodies in their educational leadership issue and absolutely make any difficult decision freely at school/office level without any external pressure. Bush, T. (2007) has explained that the process of deciding on the aims of the organization is at the heart of educational management. He also stated that in most schools, aims are decided by the principal, often working in association with the senior management team (SMT) and perhaps also with the school governing

body (SGB). However, school aims are strongly influenced by pressures from the external environment, and particularly from the expectations of the government.

Students miss behaving problems is the major finding of this study. This is directly associated with the analysis of data indicated that there is high lawlessness behavior in the schools under study. In this regards, Ngwokabuenui, P. Y. (2015) has identified that indiscipline has been a major and continuous administrative problem among secondary schools in developing countries.

### **Leadership Functions**

Regarding to Shared vision, strategies and objectives many questions have been asked. Data shows that the schools/ educational organizations visions is shared, the vision and mission clearly links the school or educational organizational future, schools/ educational organizations has clearly set a strategy for continuous improvement process, Strategic goals are communicated and understood at every level of the organization and all the activities of the schools are well planned, organized and structured to make smooth flow of activities.

Leaders give a direction to the followers and keep them on track to move in the right direction. Concerning to education leaders offers constant coaching and guidance to the staff in their operations and their collegiality approach with their staff members and they capacitated the staff in their work performance, Smooth communication among the school members and staff evaluation result shows the direction of future performance.

Staff inspiration is one of the functions of the education leadership. Data shown that, the respondents were unable to decide their agreement and disagreement for the issues raised as; leaders encourages teachers and staff by using methods of encouragement and the energizing function of the participative approach in the decision making process of academic issues

### **Leadership Resilience Techniques**

Resilience is a mode of interacting with events in the environment that is activated and nurtured in time of stress (Tait, M. 2008).

Data shown that majority of respondents were revealed that educational leadership practices strong communication with community and uses their engagement in the school affairs. Bolman and Deal (as cited in Falmer, T. A., 2010) have stated that the importance of relationship when facing adversity. Further they emphasized that when educational leaders openly communicate about differences of opinion while solving problems, they increase the likelihood of problem resolution. Moreover, Bagwell, J. (2020) has indicated that by building resilience and deepening social connections, school leaders will help their school communities to see that events unfolding as opportunities to challenge themselves to be adaptive and invest in building resilience by enlisting the leadership and support of others.

The study revealed that the majority of educational leadership attempts to care for staff and build their capacity through instructional leadership and professional learning activities and forming relationships and connectivity throughout educational settings. Data also indicates that educational leaders approach their staff with good ethical behavior, compassionately, kindly and gracefully. In this regard Falmer, T. A. (2010) has stated that a positive attitude during difficult times can simultaneously promote personal health and serve as a professional example to both colleagues and educational stakeholders alike. As resilience strategy optimistic attitude can helps leaders to build bridges opposing opinion. Falmer, T. A. further elaborated that positive mental outlooks can also help educational leaders to be resilient in the face of adversity.

The analyzed data indicates that majority participants were shown their agreement that educational leadership encourage adaptive practices to deal with different situations and risk-taking solutions, promote creativity and innovation as part of values to constantly improve changes. Yukl, G.,

& Mahsud, R. (2010) have explained that flexible and adaptive leadership involves changing behavior in appropriate ways as the situation changes. As resilience strategy in time of difficulty, the study also shows that educational leaders were rendering a flexible leadership to make adaptive to changes and changes their leading style based on the challenging situation. Furthermore, Yukl & Mahsud have discussed that flexible and adaptive leadership is important when usual events disrupt the work or create an immediate problem that requires the leaders' attention to minimize the adverse effects for the organization. The type of leadership behavior is also important in determining performance or followers' attitude during a crisis (Teo, et al., 2017).

Moreover, as resilience strategy, the respondents were asked to rate the fairness of educational leadership to treats staff differently but equally, that the majority of respondents were agreed. Leaders must have strong ethical standards and a sense of fairness; they must not play favorites. The distribution of duties and expectations should be fair but not necessary equal (Kalargyrou V. et al. (2012).

### Conclusion

To wrap up the research study revealed that educational leaders challenging with high lawlessness behavior in schools, students in disciplinary problems, untrusting problem of teachers to their leaders specially during instructional activities monitoring, school aims are strongly influenced by pressures from the external environment particularly from the expectations of the government political environment and lacks leadership commitment in coping a challenging situation.

The researcher intensely endorsing those educational leaders should have professional training and their selection to the leadership position should be through professional computation without any external pressures of superiors. One of the keys to being an effective educational leader in changing situation is the application of the necessary developing leadership resilience strategy. Evolving having connectivity and good communication with

community, optimistic attitude towards followers with good ethical behavior, compassionately, kindly and elegantly, evenhanded as well as flexible and adaptive leadership, in this regards leaders can cope up with challenging or turbulent circumstances.

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