

THE INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHERS' IDEALIZED INFLUENCE (CHARISMA) PRACTICES ON LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GANZE SUB COUNTY

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Accepted: October 9, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of headteachers' idealized influence (charisma) practices on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze Sub County, Kilifi County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were: to examine the influence of role model behaviors on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze Subcounty, to determine the influence of ethical leadership on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi county lastly to examine the influence of building school trust on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi county. The study was guided by Theory X and Y. A mixed-methods approach was employed. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. Data was collected from 210 respondents comprising headteachers, teachers, learners, and education officials through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between headteachers' idealized influence and learners' academic performance ($\beta = 0.366$, $p < 0.001$). Headteachers who demonstrated ethical leadership, earned admiration, and fostered trust significantly contributed to improved learner engagement, discipline, and academic achievement. The study concludes that charisma-based leadership is a powerful determinant of academic success in resource-constrained settings.

Key Words: idealized Influence, Transformational Leadership, Charisma, Headteachers, Academic Performance, Public Primary Schools, Ganze Sub County, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Transformational leaders, through idealized influence, serve as role models, guiding and inspiring their followers to achieve shared goals (KEMI, 2014). Such leaders focus on best practices and hold students and teachers accountable for maintaining high standards (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). By articulating a compelling vision for educational achievement, leaders inspire educators and students to strive for excellence, instilling a sense of purpose and direction among them (Beverborg, Slegers, Endedijk & Van Veen, 2017; Hukpati, 2009). Through their charisma and effective communication, these leaders encourage collaboration and continuous improvement, setting high academic goals and promoting creativity in teaching methods. Transformational head teachers drive innovation by empowering educators to explore new technologies and tailor instruction to meet diverse student needs (Korean & Shahbazi, 2016). Additionally, they provide personalized support and mentorship, fostering professional growth and equipping teachers with the skills necessary for meaningful learning experiences (Kwan, 2020). These leaders also excel in managing change and encouraging a climate of creativity, ultimately leading to enhanced learner academic performance and successful organizational transformation (Mohamed, 2023; Abbas, Hisham-Ul-Hassan & Raza, 2024).

Emeanulu, and Sayed (2024) studied the influence of transformational leadership style on students' learning motivation in UK Universities. One aspect of transformational leadership style highlighted by this study was regarded students' motivation for change management and the leader's duty, according to the findings. The findings indicate a relationship between students' motivation and change management using the transformational leadership strategy that was found. The study also shown how students' learning motivation and performance are enhanced in the educational sector by the use of transformational leadership. Also, this study clarifies transformational leadership approaches in UK institutions to better understand how to increase students' drive to learn in order to accomplish higher academic goals. By outlining the relationship between transformational leadership and change management of educational leadership, it advances research on educational leadership and management. However, the study focused on university students in the UK, creating a contextual gap in understanding how headteachers' idealized influence impacts academic performance at the primary school level in Ganze Sub-County.

Dukamo and Botha (2024) studied teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership practice and its impact on student academic performance in the Sidama Region, Ethiopia. According to the study's findings, most teachers perceived and agreed that their school's principal adopt transformational leadership practices. The study also showed that the principal's transformational leadership practices significantly and positively impact students' academic attainment. The linear multiple regression analysis revealed that changes in the principal's transformational leadership approach account for 61.4% of the variation in student academic performance. However, this study was conducted in a secondary school setting, leaving a gap in examining the direct influence of headteachers' idealized influence on learners' academic performance in Ganze Sub-County primary schools.

Sengendo and Musinguzi (2024) studied the influence of headteachers' transformational leadership attributes on academic performance: a case of private secondary schools in Uganda. The study conducted in the central region of Uganda, encompassing 276 schools, 425 teachers, and Directors of Studies, utilized a multi-leadership questionnaire and multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of headteachers' transformational leadership attributes on academic performance. The findings revealed that Idealized Influence positively affects academic performance at UCE (by 15.4%) while Inspirational Motivation negatively impacts it (decreasing performance by 14.0%). At UACE, Idealized Influence and Intellectual Stimulation were significant, with Idealized Influence decreasing performance by 14.4% and Intellectual Stimulation increasing it by 12.9%. The study found that while Idealized Influence positively affected UCE performance, it had a negative impact on UACE results. This contradiction suggests the need for further research into how idealized influence functions in different school contexts. Additionally, the study was

conducted in private secondary schools, creating a contextual gap regarding public primary schools in Ganze Sub-County.

Muriuki Nzinga and Chiroma(2021) studied transformational leadership: teachers' idealized influence on students' academic performance in county secondary schools in Kirinyaga, Kenya. The study used a mixed-methods approach, starting with quantitative data collection through surveys to assess teachers' idealized management practices (IMP) on students' academic performance (SAP), followed by qualitative phenomenological interviews to explore teachers' experiences with transformational leadership. A sample of 48 teachers and 359 students participated. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, revealing a significant positive influence of IMP on KCSE performance (0.208 at $\alpha=0.05$). The study suggests further research on the impact of transformational leadership on school culture. However, the study primarily focused on teachers rather than headteachers, making it necessary to examine how headteachers' charisma affects academic performance at the primary school level in Ganze Sub-County.

Musyoki, Okoth, Kalai and Okumbe (2021a) investigated the impact of principals' idealized influence on students' Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance in public secondary schools in Kenya. Their findings showed that idealized influence had a constant of 6.664, a standard error of 1.888, and a standardized coefficient of -220, with a T-test value of 1.590 and a significance level of 0.115. Correlation analysis indicated that idealized influence was positively associated with academic performance, explaining 83.6% of the variance in KCSE results. The study highlighted that principals who effectively used teamwork, diverse skills, and strong relationships with teachers saw better outcomes, though the decline in KCSE performance in 2016-2017 suggested gaps in fully applying idealized influence attributes. However, the research was limited to secondary schools and did not assess how headteachers' charisma impacts primary school learners, leaving a contextual and educational-level gap in Ganze Sub-County.

These studies indicate the importance of transformational leadership, particularly idealized influence, in academic performance. However, they focus on secondary schools, higher education institutions, or teachers rather than headteachers' charisma in public primary schools. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of headteachers' idealized influence (charisma) on learner academic performance in Ganze Sub-County primary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The existing literature shows the impact of transformational leadership, including idealized influence, on academic performance across various educational settings. However, a significant contextual and educational-level gap remains concerning the specific influence of headteachers' idealized influence (charisma) practices on learner academic performance in public primary schools within Ganze Sub-County. Studies by Emeanulu and Sayed (2024) focused on university students in the UK, while Dukamo and Botha (2024), Sengendo and Musunguzi (2024), Muriuki, Nzinga, and Chiroma (2021), and Musyoki, Okoth, Kalai, and Okumbe (2021a) primarily examined secondary school contexts in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya, or focused on teachers rather than headteachers. Furthermore, Sengendo and Musunguzi's (2024) contradictory findings on idealized influence in different academic levels highlight the need for context-specific research.

Ganze Sub-County has consistently recorded the lowest KCPE performance in Kilifi County, with an average score of 230.7 in 2019, improving only slightly to 242.0 in 2023. In contrast, sub-counties like Malindi (270.4 to 281.0) and Rabai (260.9 to 272.1) have shown stronger academic progress. Notable even with the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum, the kpsea standardized performance show that most learners are not meeting the expectations. This persistent learner performance gap underscores the need to investigate factors contributing to low achievement levels. A study on the influence of headteachers' idealized influence(charisma) practices is essential in identifying leadership gaps and developing strategies to enhance academic performance in Ganze's public primary schools.

Study Objectives

- To examine the influence of role model behaviors on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze Sub County
- To determine influence of ethical leadership on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi County.
- To examine the influence of building school trust on learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi County.

Research Hypothesis

- H_{01} : There is no statistical significance between role model behaviors practices and learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze Sub County
- H_{02} : There is no statistical significance between ethical leadership practices and learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi County.
- H_{03} : There is no statistical significance between building school trust practices and learner academic performance in public primary schools in Ganze subcounty Kilifi County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the systems theory, the human capital theory and the transformational leadership model.

Systems Theory

The Systems Theory was founded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and posits that an organization or system comprises interconnected components whose interactions determine the system's overall behavior and performance. In the context of education, systems theory underscores the importance of understanding schools as complex systems where various elements, such as leadership, teaching methodologies, student behavior, parental involvement, and community resources, interact to influence educational outcomes. This perspective aligns with the study.

The study examines how head teachers' transformational leadership practices affect learners' academic performance in public primary schools. From a systems theory perspective, transformational leadership is a critical component that can drive systemic change within a school. By fostering a vision, motivating staff, and creating an inclusive and collaborative environment, transformational leaders can influence other parts of the system, such as teacher morale, instructional quality, and student engagement. These changes, in turn, can impact learners' academic performance.

The systems theory framework suggests that the interactions between the head teacher's leadership style and other school elements create a ripple effect throughout the entire educational system. As head teachers demonstrate transformational leadership practices, they not only affect immediate stakeholders, like teachers and students, but also create a broader culture of excellence that can lead to improved academic outcomes. The study's findings, therefore, are crucial in understanding how transformational leadership practices contribute to enhancing overall school performance, as they suggest that effective leadership can catalyze positive changes throughout the educational system, leading to better academic achievements in public primary schools in Ganze Sub County.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964) asserts that individuals' skills, knowledge, and experience are valuable assets contributing to productivity and economic success. In the context of education, this theory suggests that investing in human capital, such as teachers' qualifications, leadership training, and professional development, can lead to improved outcomes, such as learners' academic performance. Relating this to the study human capital theory underscores the significance of head teachers' transformational leadership in enhancing educational outcomes. By embodying transformational leadership practices such as inspiring a shared vision, fostering innovation, and supporting professional growth head teachers can boost the human capital within their schools. This, in turn, can positively influence teachers' skills, motivation, and effectiveness in the classroom.

In this study, if head teachers adopt transformational leadership practices, they are likely investing in the school's human capital, which is crucial for driving academic success. By encouraging continuous learning and fostering a collaborative environment, transformational leaders can enhance teachers' capabilities, leading to improved instructional quality and, consequently, better academic performance among learners. Therefore, human capital theory provides a framework for understanding how transformational leadership in head teachers can create a ripple effect, improving the overall human capital within schools and leading to better educational outcomes in Ganze Sub County's public primary schools.

Transformational Leadership Model

Transformational Leadership Model by Bass (1985) gives a framework for investigating the influence of different leadership practices on the results of organizations, the model of transformational leadership centers on four pillars: intellectual stimulation, personalized attention, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (charisma). The study looks at how these transformational leadership strategies influence student achievement in Ganze Sub County's public elementary schools. Specifically, it aims to understand the distinct influence of each leadership component in shaping academic outcomes.

The study objective examined the influence of idealized influence (charisma) among Head Teachers and its impact on learner academic performance. This involves assessing how Head Teachers, as charismatic role models, influence the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and students. By embodying idealized influence, Head Teachers can set a positive example, instill trust, and encourage a culture of excellence. The insights gained from this study can inform educational leadership practices and strategies to improve academic performance in the region.

Conceptual Framework

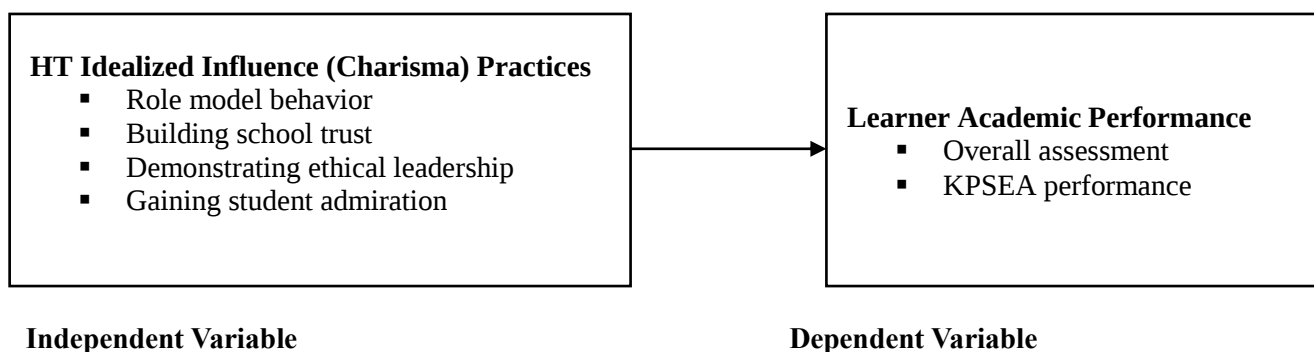


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Head Teachers' idealized influence (charisma) practices and learner academic performance

Emeanulu, and Sayed(2024) studied the influence of transformational leadership style on students' learning motivation in UK Universities. The One aspect of transformational leadership style highlighted by this study was regarded students' motivation for change management and the leader's duty, according to the findings. The findings indicate a relationship between students' motivation and change management using the transformational leadership strategy that was found. The study also shown how students' learning motivation and performance are enhanced in the educational sector by the use of transformational leadership. Also, this study clarifies transformational leadership approaches in UK institutions to better understand how to increase students' drive to learn in order to accomplish higher academic goals. By outlining the relationship between transformational leadership and change management of educational leadership, it advances research on educational leadership and management. However, the study focused on university students in the UK, creating a contextual gap in understanding how headteachers' idealized influence impacts academic performance at the primary school level in Ganze Sub-County.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

A mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, was employed in this descriptive survey design to investigate the relationship between headteachers' transformational leadership practices and learner academic performance in Ganze Sub County public primary schools. The study targeted a population of 444 participants, including 106 headteachers, 106 teachers, 212 learners, and 10 education officials. A sample of 210 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, with the sample size determined by Yamane's formula. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, interview guides, and a document analysis template. Pilot testing was conducted on 21 questionnaires to establish validity and reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha used to assess reliability and supervisor input for content validity. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis), while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This analysis, based on responses from 168 individuals, paints a highly positive picture of perceived improvements in learners' academic performance within public primary schools in Ganze Sub County, Kenya. These gains are significantly attributed to the idealized influence, or charisma, of headteachers. The vast majority of responses consistently fall into the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories, indicating a strong consensus on improving academic outcomes. For instance, statements about "noticeable improvement in test scores" and "higher mastery due to effective teaching practices" show a combined agreement of over 98%, with "Strongly Agree" alone accounting for 67.9% and 64.3% respectively. This reflects a very high level of confidence in the positive impact of current educational efforts. While a small minority, ranging from 1.8% to 5.9%, felt neutral, only a negligible 1.8% disagreed with the "measurable enhancement in students' academic achievements and performance metrics," suggesting near-universal positive perceptions.

Table 1: Responses on Head Teachers' Idealized Influence (Charisma) Practices

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)
The head teacher earns admiration and respect from students through their actions and decisions.	4.64	.563	126 (75.0%)	40 (23.8%)	2 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher's behavior positively influences the attitudes and actions of both students and staff.	4.53	.665	112 (66.7%)	53 (31.5%)	3 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher exemplifies ethical leadership in all aspects of their role.	4.38	.699	97 (57.7%)	67 (39.9%)	4 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher has successfully built a high level of trust within the school community.	4.35	.683	94 (56.0%)	70 (41.7%)	4 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher is perceived as a strong, inspirational leader who embodies the values and vision of the school.	4.35	.657	94 (56.0%)	70 (41.7%)	4 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher's leadership is characterized by integrity and transparency.	4.18	.622	80 (47.6%)	80 (47.6%)	8 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher consistently demonstrates role model behavior for both students and staff.	4.14	.734	75 (44.6%)	85 (50.6%)	8 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)
The head teacher fosters a sense of pride and loyalty among students and staff through their exemplary conduct.	4.03	.822	68 (40.5%)	90 (53.6%)	8 (4.8%)	2 (1.2%)

Table 1 provides strong evidence of how these practices positively shape the academic and social environment in these schools. One prominent practice is the headteacher's ability to earn admiration and respect from students, which had the highest mean score of 4.64 (SD = 0.563). This effectiveness in gaining student respect is crucial for fostering a positive school climate, leading to improved behavior, motivation, and ultimately, academic performance. Headteachers also significantly influence the attitudes and actions of both students and staff, evidenced by a mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.665), which creates a cohesive environment where everyone works towards common goals, including academic success. Exemplifying ethical leadership is another key component, with a mean of 4.38 (SD = 0.699). This sets a strong foundation for trust and integrity, promoting fairness and accountability essential for a positive learning environment and academic growth.

Building a high level of trust within the school community also emerged as a significant finding, with a mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.683). Trust is fundamental for collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect, creating a supportive environment where individuals feel safe to engage in the learning process. Similarly, the perception of headteachers as strong, inspirational leaders who embody the school's values and vision also received a mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.657), suggesting they inspire others through their clear direction and purpose. Leadership characterized by integrity and transparency, with a mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.622), builds credibility and sets a standard for ethical behavior across the school community. Furthermore, headteachers demonstrating role model behavior for both students and staff, with a mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.734), instills values like responsibility and diligence, leading to a more disciplined and motivated school environment. Finally, fostering a sense of pride and loyalty among students and staff through exemplary conduct, with a

mean of 4.03 (SD = 0.822), reflects the headteacher's ability to create a strong connection to the school, leading to greater investment in academic and professional roles. The findings indicate that headteachers in Ganze Sub County are effectively demonstrating idealized influence practices that positively impact the school community and promote academic success.

The findings from Ganze Sub-County regarding headteachers' idealized influence practices closely align with existing empirical literature on transformational leadership and its positive role in academic outcomes. There's a strong convergence with studies like Dukamo and Botha (2024), which found that principals' transformational leadership significantly influenced student performance in Ethiopian secondary schools, accounting for 61.4% of the variation. Similarly, Muriuki *et al.* (2021) established a significant positive effect of teachers' idealized influence on KCSE performance in Kenyan county secondary schools. In line with these studies, the Ganze findings highlight that headteachers who demonstrate charisma through trust-building, ethical conduct, role modeling, and earning admiration cultivate an environment of respect, responsibility, and academic focus that enhances learner outcomes. These findings affirm that idealized influence is not merely symbolic but actively shapes academic behaviors and student engagement in primary schools, suggesting that transformational leadership traits are impactful across various education levels.

However, some notable divergences exist. Studies like Sengendo and Musinguzi (2024) present mixed outcomes, where idealized influence positively impacted UCE performance but had a negative effect at the UACE level. This contrasts with the uniformly positive perceptions reported in Ganze, potentially indicating that idealized influence has varied effects depending on school level, leadership interpretation, or student maturity. Furthermore, most reviewed studies, including Musyoki *et al.* (2021a) and Emeanulu and Sayed (2024), focus on secondary or tertiary contexts, often emphasizing teacher or principal relationships with staff rather than directly with learners. The current study, therefore, fills a crucial contextual and conceptual gap by establishing that idealized influence—especially when directed toward both students and teachers—has a direct, observable effect on learner academic performance in public primary schools. The findings emphasize that charisma in leadership is not only about visionary messaging but also about creating trusting, ethical, and motivational learning environments that tangibly enhance outcomes among younger learners.

The interviews showed that head teachers serve as ethical role models whose conduct inspires respect and emulation. An educational official shared, *"Learners admire the head teacher because they are always punctual, neat, and disciplined. That influences even their own behavior."* By demonstrating integrity, commitment, and professionalism, head teachers earn the trust of both staff and students. Their visible presence in school activities, including academic clinics and extracurricular programs, strengthens the sense of community and leadership credibility.

In addition, officials noted that head teachers build trust through transparency and consistency in decision-making. One respondent explained, *"When a head teacher is fair and listens to both teachers and pupils, people respect them more."* Such leaders are seen as dependable and inspiring, contributing to a positive school culture where learners feel supported and motivated. As a result, students develop better attitudes toward schooling, and teachers are more committed to their roles, leading to improved learner discipline and academic progress. The study conducted regression

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std Error	Beta	t	
Head Teachers' idealized influence(charisma)	.366	.065	.423	5.620	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learners Academic Performance

The regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between Head Teachers' idealized influence (charisma) practices and learners' academic performance. This dimension exhibited the largest unique positive impact among all four transformational leadership practices examined. The unstandardized coefficient for idealized influence was 0.366, with a p-value of 0.000, predicting a 0.366-unit increase in learners' academic performance for every one-unit increment in this dimension, assuming other variables remain constant. The study proceeded to test the hypothesis

Head Teachers' Idealized Influence (Charisma) has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.366, and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is far less than 0.05, it suggests a significant relationship between idealized influence (charisma) and learners' academic performance. Therefore, the study rejects H_{01} , confirming that Head Teachers' idealized influence practices significantly affect academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research unequivocally concluded that Head Teachers' idealized influence (charisma) practices have a significant and the most profound positive impact on learners' academic performance in Ganze Sub County's public primary schools. This conclusion is supported by high descriptive statistics, where head teachers were widely admired and respected (e.g., mean of 4.64), and most notably, by the regression analysis which revealed the largest unstandardized coefficient (0.366, $p < 0.001$) among all transformational dimensions, signifying its powerful predictive ability.

The paramount influence of idealized influence implies that ethical leadership, integrity, and serving as a positive role model are fundamental to fostering a conducive learning environment and improving academic performance. Educational policies and leadership development frameworks should therefore place significant emphasis on cultivating these charismatic qualities in head teachers. By promoting leaders who embody strong moral values, earn trust, and inspire through their exemplary conduct, the school community can build a culture of respect, accountability, and collective pride, which is directly linked to superior academic outcomes for students in Ganze Sub County.

Based on the study's findings the study recommended:

- To TSC: Emphasize and integrate the development of idealized influence (charismatic leadership, ethical conduct, and role-modeling) as a core component of headteacher training, promotion, and continuous professional development programs.
- To MOE: Develop and implement educational policies that recognize and actively promote headteachers' idealized influence practices, ensuring that school leadership frameworks prioritize ethical leadership, integrity, and the ability to inspire trust and respect for improved academic outcomes.
- To Head Teachers: Actively cultivate and demonstrate idealized influence through ethical leadership, integrity, building trust, and serving as positive role models to foster a conducive learning environment and enhance academic performance in your schools.

Areas for Future Studies

- Investigate the long-term sustainability of the observed positive academic impacts stemming from idealized influence, and explore how these practices can be consistently fostered across different leadership tenures.
- Conduct comparative studies on the influence of headteachers' charisma in diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts within primary education to identify transferable best practices and contextual adaptations.

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