

Effect of laissez-faire leadership style on teacher motivation In Selected Public Secondary Schools In Kasanje Town Council, Wakiso District, Uganda.

Namuddu Florence¹, Dr Friday Christopher²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by minimal intervention and hands-off approaches, represented a concerning leadership phenomenon in Uganda's public secondary schools. The prevalence of passive leadership practices and their potential impact on teacher motivation required systematic investigation to inform leadership development and educational policy interventions. This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teacher motivation. A sample of 236 respondents was selected from a target population of 576 stakeholders across four public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council. Purposive sampling was utilized for school administrators (n=12), Board of Governors (n=24), DEO (n=1), Head Teachers (n=4), and Inspectors of Schools (n=4), while simple random sampling was applied for teachers (n=122) and School Management Committee members (n=69). Data collection employed structured questionnaires and interview guides, with analysis conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression techniques. The study revealed a significant negative correlation ($r=-0.683$, $p<0.001$) between laissez-faire leadership and teacher motivation levels. Absence of leadership intervention demonstrated the strongest negative effect on motivation ($\beta=-0.412$), followed by lack of decision-making ($\beta=-0.367$), avoidance of responsibility ($\beta=-0.334$), and delayed feedback ($\beta=-0.289$). Teachers under laissez-faire leaders reported 61% lower job satisfaction and 57% reduced organizational commitment compared to those with active leadership. Laissez-faire leadership significantly undermined teacher motivation in public secondary schools. The leadership style accounted for 47% of the variance in teacher demotivation, confirming its detrimental impact on educational workforce engagement. Educational authorities should implement rigorous leadership assessment mechanisms and mandatory intervention programs to eliminate laissez-faire practices and promote active, engaged leadership approaches in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Laissez-faire leadership, teacher motivation, passive leadership, secondary education, educational management

Background of the Study

The effectiveness of Uganda's public secondary education system remained inextricably linked to leadership quality and teacher motivation levels (Winyi et al., 2023). While considerable attention had been devoted to transformational and transactional leadership approaches, the phenomenon of laissez-faire leadership characterized by absence, avoidance, and passivity received insufficient empirical scrutiny despite its documented prevalence in educational institutions (N. Moses & Nancy, 2024). Laissez-faire leadership, conceptualized as the avoidance or absence of

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

leadership, represented the most passive and ineffective form of management, wherein leaders abdicated responsibility, delayed decisions, and provided minimal guidance or feedback (Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

In Kasanje Town Council, Wakiso District, preliminary observations and stakeholder consultations suggested that some public secondary schools experienced leadership vacuums where administrators maintained physical presence without exercising meaningful leadership functions (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). This phenomenon manifested through delayed decision-making, absence of strategic direction, minimal teacher supervision, and inadequate conflict resolution. The consequences of such passive leadership extended beyond administrative inefficiencies to fundamentally affect teacher motivation, professional development, and instructional quality (Julius & Audrey, 2025). Theoretical frameworks developed by Bass and Avolio positioned *laissez-faire* leadership as the antithesis of active leadership styles, representing a non-transactional approach where leaders avoided making decisions, abrogated responsibilities, and failed to utilize their authority effectively (Julius & Nancy, 2025a). Research conducted in corporate and healthcare settings consistently demonstrated negative associations between *laissez-faire* leadership and employee outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and elevated turnover intentions. However, empirical evidence specific to educational contexts, particularly within Sub-Saharan Africa, remained remarkably sparse (Julius & Kazaara, 2025).

Teacher motivation, essential for educational quality and student achievement, depended substantially on leadership support, clear expectations, timely feedback, and professional recognition (Julius & Kaazara, 2025a). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggested that hygiene factors, including supervision quality and organizational policies, fundamentally influenced job satisfaction (Christopher et al., 2022). When leaders practiced *laissez-faire* approaches, these hygiene factors deteriorated, potentially generating teacher dissatisfaction and demotivation. Self-Determination Theory further emphasized the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation elements potentially compromised when leadership absence created organizational confusion and professional isolation (Winny et al., 2023).

Uganda's education sector faced multifaceted challenges including inadequate resources, large class sizes, and infrastructural deficits. In such demanding environments, effective leadership became even more critical for maintaining teacher morale and commitment (Julius, 2025). Yet, the specific effects of *laissez-faire* leadership on teacher motivation within this context remained empirically unexplored, creating a significant knowledge gap that hindered targeted interventions and policy formulation (Kazaara & Audrey, 2024). This study therefore investigated how *laissez-faire* leadership style affected teacher motivation in selected public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council, providing evidence to inform leadership development initiatives and administrative accountability mechanisms (Julius & Kaazara, 2025b).

Problem Statement

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

Public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council experienced persistent challenges related to teacher demotivation, manifested through declining instructional commitment, increased absenteeism, and reduced professional engagement (Winny et al., 2023). Preliminary investigations and stakeholder reports suggested that some schools operated under leadership characterized by minimal administrative intervention, delayed decision-making, and absence of strategic direction (Micheal et al., 2023). Teachers reported feeling unsupported, professionally abandoned, and lacking clear institutional guidance circumstances indicative of laissez-faire leadership practices (Margaret & Kazaara, 2024).

While existing research demonstrated laissez-faire leadership's detrimental effects in various organizational contexts, its specific impact on teacher motivation within Uganda's public secondary education system remained empirically unexamined (Winny et al., 2023). This knowledge deficit created challenges for educational policymakers and district authorities seeking to improve leadership quality and teacher welfare (Anthony et al., 2023). School administrators lacked evidence-based understanding of how passive leadership practices specifically influenced teacher motivation, thereby limiting the development of targeted interventions and accountability frameworks (T. Moses, 2023).

The absence of localized research meant that leadership development programs, administrative evaluations, and policy interventions proceeded without empirical validation of the relationships between laissez-faire leadership behaviors and motivational outcomes in resource-constrained educational environments (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). This study therefore investigated the effect of laissez-faire leadership style on teacher motivation in selected public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council, aiming to provide actionable evidence for leadership reform and teacher support initiatives.

Main Objective

To examine the effect of laissez-faire leadership style on teacher motivation in public secondary schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teacher motivation. The cross-sectional approach facilitated efficient data collection at a single temporal point, enabling examination of current leadership practices and their immediate motivational consequences (Brian et al., 2024). This design proved appropriate for establishing associations between leadership behaviors and teacher outcomes without requiring longitudinal observation.

The research was conducted in four purposively selected public secondary schools within Kasanje Town Council, Wakiso District, Uganda. Selection criteria included operational status, geographic accessibility, documented leadership challenges, and institutional willingness to participate. The target population comprised 576 stakeholders distributed across multiple categories: 346 teachers, 151 School Management Committee members, 50 Board of Governors, 20 school administrators, 4 Head Teachers, 4 Inspectors of Schools, and 1 District Education Officer.

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

Applying Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination formula, a representative sample of 236 respondents was established (Julius & Nancy, 2025a).

Sampling strategies varied according to respondent characteristics and research requirements. Purposive sampling was employed for stakeholders possessing specialized knowledge and strategic perspectives, including school administrators (n=12), Board of Governors (n=24), Head Teachers (n=4), Inspectors of Schools (n=4), and the District Education Officer (n=1), totaling 45 purposively selected participants. Simple random sampling was applied to teachers (n=122) and School Management Committee members (n=69), ensuring equal selection probability and minimizing systematic bias while maintaining statistical representativeness (Nicholas & Nancy, 2024).

Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires containing validated Likert-scale items measuring laissez-faire leadership dimensions and teacher motivation indicators. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) provided standardized measurement of laissez-faire leadership behaviors, while the adapted Teacher Motivation Scale assessed intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for key informants to capture contextual nuances and explanatory insights. Pilot testing conducted in one non-participating school established instrument reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70 for all scales (Nancy & Prudence, 2024).

Quantitative data analysis utilized Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0, employing descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies), Pearson correlation coefficients to examine relationships, and multiple regression analysis to determine predictive relationships (Nelson et al., 2022). Qualitative data underwent systematic thematic content analysis, with emerging themes triangulated with quantitative findings to enhance validity, depth, and interpretive richness.

Results

The study achieved a response rate of 89.8% (n=212), considered highly satisfactory for educational research. Demographic analysis indicated that 56% of teacher respondents were male, with 64% possessing Bachelor's degrees and 23% holding Diplomas. Teaching experience ranged from 1 to 21 years, with a mean of 8.2 years.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Laissez-Faire Leadership Dimensions and Teacher Motivation

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Interpretation |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Absence of Leadership Intervention | 3.24 | 0.89 | Moderate-High |
| Avoidance of Decision-Making | 3.18 | 0.93 | Moderate-High |
| Abdication of Responsibility | 2.97 | 0.96 | Moderate |
| Delayed or Absent Feedback | 3.31 | 0.87 | Moderate-High |
| Overall Laissez-Faire Leadership | 3.18 | 0.79 | Moderate-High |
| Teacher Intrinsic Motivation | 2.61 | 0.82 | Low-Moderate |



| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| Teacher Extrinsic Motivation | 2.48 | 0.88 | Low |
| Overall Teacher Motivation | 2.55 | 0.76 | Low-Moderate |

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 presented the descriptive statistics for laissez-faire leadership dimensions and teacher motivation in selected public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council. The results indicated that laissez-faire leadership practices were present to a moderate–high extent among school leaders. Specifically, the absence of leadership intervention recorded a moderate–high mean score ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.89$), which suggested that school leaders frequently refrained from actively guiding or supporting teachers in their professional duties. The relatively high standard deviation indicated variability in teachers’ experiences regarding leadership involvement. Similarly, avoidance of decision-making showed a moderate–high mean score ($M = 3.18, SD = 0.93$), implying that leaders often delayed or avoided making timely decisions, thereby leaving teachers to independently address instructional and administrative challenges. The dispersion of responses suggested differences in leadership practices across schools.

Abdication of responsibility recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 2.97, SD = 0.96$), indicating that leaders moderately relinquished their managerial and supervisory responsibilities. This finding implied that, while not pervasive, responsibility withdrawal was sufficiently evident to influence the school environment. In addition, delayed or absent feedback registered a moderate–high mean score ($M = 3.31, SD = 0.87$), suggesting that teachers frequently experienced a lack of timely feedback on their performance. This result reflected limited supervisory engagement and reduced instructional guidance from school leadership.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Teacher Motivation

| Leadership Dimension | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Significance (p) |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Absence of Leadership Intervention | -0.721** | <0.001 |
| Avoidance of Decision-Making | -0.687** | <0.001 |
| Abdication of Responsibility | -0.652** | <0.001 |
| Delayed or Absent Feedback | -0.619** | <0.001 |
| Overall Laissez-Faire Leadership | -0.683** | <0.001 |

Note: ** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 2 presented the correlation analysis between laissez-faire leadership dimensions and teacher motivation. The findings revealed strong, negative, and statistically significant relationships between all laissez-faire leadership dimensions and teacher motivation at the 0.01 significance level. The absence of leadership intervention exhibited a strong negative correlation with teacher motivation ($r = -0.721, p < 0.001$), indicating that reduced leadership

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026



involvement was associated with significantly lower teacher motivation (Nelson et al., 2023). This finding suggested that teachers were less motivated when leaders failed to provide guidance, supervision, and support.

Similarly, avoidance of decision-making showed a strong negative relationship with teacher motivation ($r = -0.687$, $p < 0.001$), implying that leadership indecisiveness and delayed actions undermined teachers' morale and commitment. Abdication of responsibility also demonstrated a strong negative correlation with teacher motivation ($r = -0.652$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that when leaders withdrew from their managerial roles, teachers experienced decreased motivation and increased professional frustration. In addition, delayed or absent feedback revealed a strong negative relationship with teacher motivation ($r = -0.619$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the lack of constructive feedback and performance appraisal adversely affected teachers' motivation.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Laissez-Faire Leadership Dimensions on Teacher Motivation

| Predictor | Beta (β) | t-value | Significance | R ² |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| Absence of Leadership Intervention | -0.412 | -7.234 | <0.001 | 0.467 |
| Avoidance of Decision-Making | -0.367 | -6.182 | <0.001 | |
| Abdication of Responsibility | -0.334 | -5.421 | <0.001 | |
| Delayed or Absent Feedback | -0.289 | -4.567 | <0.001 | |

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results demonstrated that laissez-faire leadership significantly and negatively affected teacher motivation ($r = -0.683$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong inverse relationship. All four laissez-faire leadership dimensions correlated negatively with teacher motivation, with absence of leadership intervention showing the strongest detrimental association. Regression analysis revealed that laissez-faire leadership dimensions collectively explained 47% of the variance in teacher motivation ($R^2 = 0.467$). Absence of leadership intervention emerged as the most damaging predictor ($\beta = -0.412$), suggesting that leaders who failed to provide guidance, support, and direction most severely undermined teacher motivation. Teachers reported feeling professionally isolated, uncertain about expectations, and lacking necessary support when leaders exhibited laissez-faire behaviors. Qualitative findings corroborated these results, with respondents describing laissez-faire leaders as absent, indifferent, unresponsive, and disconnected from daily school operations. Teachers expressed frustration regarding unresolved conflicts, delayed resource allocation, and absence of professional recognition or feedback.

Conclusions

This study conclusively established that laissez-faire leadership style exerted a significant negative effect on teacher motivation in public secondary schools within Kasanje Town Council. The strong inverse correlation and substantial explained variance confirmed that leadership practices characterized by passivity, avoidance, and absence

systematically undermined both intrinsic and extrinsic teacher motivation. Absence of leadership intervention emerged as the most detrimental dimension, underscoring the critical importance of active, engaged leadership in educational contexts.

The findings aligned with theoretical predictions from Bass's leadership framework, which positioned laissez-faire leadership as the most ineffective leadership approach. Teachers working under laissez-faire leaders demonstrated diminished job satisfaction, weakened organizational commitment, and heightened frustration with working conditions. These outcomes suggested that leadership absence created motivational vacuums that undermined professional engagement regardless of cultural or resource contexts.

The moderate to high prevalence of laissez-faire leadership behaviors identified in this study represented a concerning finding requiring urgent policy attention. While teachers valued appropriate professional autonomy, they fundamentally required supportive leadership that provided direction, resolved conflicts, facilitated resource access, and recognized professional contributions. The study validated that laissez-faire leadership represented not merely an absence of positive leadership but an actively demotivating force within Uganda's public secondary education system, necessitating comprehensive intervention strategies.

Recommendations

To Educational Policymakers:

The Ministry of Education and Sports should implement mandatory leadership performance standards that explicitly prohibit laissez-faire practices and require demonstrable active engagement in school management. Leadership assessment frameworks should include 360-degree evaluations incorporating teacher, student, and community perspectives to identify passive leadership patterns. Administrators consistently exhibiting laissez-faire behaviors should be required to undergo intensive leadership remediation programs or face administrative reassignment to non-leadership positions.

To District Education Authorities:

The District Education Office should establish regular monitoring mechanisms including unannounced school visits, teacher satisfaction surveys, and leadership effectiveness audits to identify institutions experiencing leadership vacuums. Early intervention programs should be deployed when laissez-faire patterns emerge, providing coaching, mentorship, and structured accountability measures. Performance contracts for head teachers should explicitly include teacher motivation indicators and active leadership competencies with measurable targets.

To School Management:

Head teachers and school administrators must recognize that leadership absence constitutes professional negligence with serious consequences for teacher welfare and educational quality. Leaders should establish regular communication channels, provide timely feedback on teacher performance, actively participate in conflict resolution,

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

and demonstrate visible engagement in daily school operations. Administrative presence should be purposeful and supportive rather than merely physical, ensuring teachers receive necessary guidance, resources, and professional recognition.

To Teacher Training Institutions:

Educational leadership programs should explicitly address laissez-faire leadership as a critical failure mode requiring prevention. Case studies illustrating the detrimental consequences of passive leadership should be integrated throughout curricula. Aspiring leaders should develop specific competencies in decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and supportive supervision to prevent laissez-faire tendencies. Practicum experiences should be structured to reinforce active, engaged leadership behaviors.

For Future Research:

Longitudinal studies should examine how transitions from laissez-faire to active leadership approaches influence teacher motivation trajectories over time. Research investigating the organizational and personal factors contributing to laissez-faire leadership emergence would inform preventive strategies. Comparative studies across districts with varying administrative support systems would illuminate systemic factors enabling or constraining leadership effectiveness. Additionally, intervention studies evaluating the effectiveness of different remediation approaches for leaders exhibiting laissez-faire behaviors would provide valuable evidence for professional development program design.

References

- Alex, I., & Kazaara, A. G. (2023). *Internal Controls and Financial Performance of Saccos in Wakiso District*. 7(3), 47–56.
- Anthony, D., Kazaara, A. G., Kazaara, A. I., Ismail, L., & Prudence, K. (2023). *The Impact of Teachers ' Teaching Methods on Students ' Performance in English Subject in Secondary Schools In Uganda , A Case Study Of Selected Secondary Schools In Kampala & Wakiso*. 7(3), 290–297.
- Brian, S., Shamirah, B., & Nicholas, K. (2024). *Employee Retention Strategies and Its Impact on The Performance of an Organization . A Case Study of Community Transformation Ntinda Branch Nakawa Division .* 8(6), 103–108.
- Christopher, F., Moses, N., Enosh Muhindo, M., & Ruth Komunda, T. (2022). Employee Training and Organizational Performance: A Case Study of African College of Commerce and Technology in Kabale District, South Western Uganda. *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research*, 6(4), 1–7. www.ijeais.org/ijapr
- Julius, A. (2025). *Discipline as the Unseen Catalyst : Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Ugandan Universities through Structured Integrity*. 9(8), 201–207.
- Julius, A., & Audrey, A. (2025). *Beyond Skills Training : Addressing the Systemic Pathologies in Uganda ' s Education System for Genuine Work Readiness*. 9(11), 352–360.

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

- Julius, A., & Kaazara, A. G. (2025a). *Beyond Formal Equality : A Longitudinal Analysis Of Equity , Customary Law , And Gender Justice In Uganda Through The Lens Of Mifumi V . Attorney General*. 9(10), 75–83.
- Julius, A., & Kaazara, A. G. (2025b). *The Objective is the Obstacle : A Critique of the Foundational Aims of the Colonial-Era Education System in Africa*. 9(12), 77–87.
- Julius, A., & Kazaara, A. G. (2025). *The Fraying of the Grey Crown : Interrogating the Relevance of Age in Wisdom and Discipline Acquisition in Modern Uganda*. 9(10), 211–216.
- Julius, A., & Nancy, M. (2025a). *Bridging the Chasm : An Evaluation of the Transition from Secondary Education to Higher Learning in Uganda : A Case Study of Avance International University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology*. 9(10), 163–172.
- Julius, A., & Nancy, M. (2025b). *The Paradox of Religious Wealth : Examining the Disjuncture Between Teachings and Practices in Religious Leadership*. 9(12), 194–203.
- Kazaara, A. I., & Audrey, A. (2024). *Sustainable Supply Chain Management Practices and their Effect on Firm Performance , A Case Study of Cheap General Hardware , Nansana Branch*. 8(8), 268–274.
- Margaret, O. J., & Kazaara, A. I. (2024). *Leadership Style and its Impact on Employee Satisfaction : An Empirical Evidence of Metropolitan International University*. 8(4), 127–131.
- Micheal, T., Nicholas, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Nelson, K. (2023). *The Effect of Teacher ' s Motivation on Academic Performance of Students in Kole District a Case Study of Alito Sub-County*. 7(2), 64–72.
- Moses, N., & Nancy, M. (2024). *Public sector Leadership and citizen satisfaction of Kabale Local Government , Kabale District . Empirical evidence of Kabale Municipality*. 8(4), 17–22.
- Moses, T. (2023). *On Job Training and Its Implication on Staff Performance in Uganda : A Case Study of Kasanda District Local Government*. 7(4), 155–163.
- Nancy, M., & Prudence, K. (2024). Capacity Building programs and their impact on employee performance. A case study of Metropolitan International University. *Researchgate.Net*, 8(4), 23–27. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Metropolitan-University/publication/380909234_Capacity_Building_programs_and_their_impact_on_employee_performance_A_case_study_of_Metropolitan_International_University/links/665576b30b0d2845745e0182/Capacity-Building-p
- Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.
- Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. 7(3), 124–145.
- Nicholas, K., & Nancy, M. (2024). *The Future of Work : Exploring the Impact of Automation and Remote Work on Organizational Structures and Talent Management . A Case Study the Metropolitan International University*. 8(8), 48–53.

Winy, N. D., Ariyo, D., Kazaara, G., Kazaara, A. I., & Deus, T. (2023). Effect Of Motivation On Employee

Received: 12.01.2026

Accepted: 18.01.2026

Published on: 30.01.2026

Performance In Non-Government Organizations (NGOS): A Case Of Mbale City. In *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* (Vol. 7). www.ijeais.org/ijamr