Principals' Leadership Orientation and Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools of Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract. As accountability in educational leadership has increased, interest in finding the most rewarding type of principal leadership orientation that helps to improve student performance is enhanced. The lack of agreement on the most rewarding type of leadership orientation among task-focused, relationship-focused or/and change-focused behaviours, as well as the incidence of poor performance by students has resulted in the Gedeo Zone of Ethiopia commissioning us to conduct this study. The objective of the study was to identify the most profitable type of principal leadership orientation that enhances the success of students in the secondary schools of the zone. Three ineffective (least achievers) and three effective (best achiever) schools of the zone were chosen purposively, as sample for the study by using the maximum variation strategy. The total of the sample was 339, of which 321 (n=321) participated in the quantitative part of the study, while 18 were involved in the qualitative part. A questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used as instruments to collect the data. The quantitative data were analysed by using means, standard deviations, correlations, regressions, and line graphs, while the qualitative data were analysed via a content-analytical approach. The findings of this study revealed that high task and change-oriented behaviours among school leadership enhanced the students' success, while high relationship-oriented behaviours intended to get a mere affiliation affected the learners' success negatively. High task-oriented behaviours enable principals to initiate work, directing members towards goals, and monitoring members' performance. The active engagement of principals in teaching and learning activities enhances students' academic 'achievements more than mere passive involvement to deal with the challenges they may encounter. Thus, principals are advised to exhibit high task and high change-oriented behaviours, as their engagement

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affects other stakeholders to play their role in improving students' learning.

1. Introduction

The role of school principals becomes more demanding and complex, as school activities expand in size and complexity, because of the high expectations of the learners and the parents. Principals, as school leaders, must be capable of inspiring the school community with what they do and how they do it, so that all stakeholders in the school context are motivated to realise the success of all students (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Onorato, 2013; Tesfaye & Ayalew, 2020). Thus, the complex and continuously changing school environment requires capable school principals, who exert a positive influence by exhibiting the appropriate leadership behaviours that would motivate the school community to work enthusiastically, in order to realise the success of all the students.

Studies of effective schools, where nearly all the students are assumed to have reached their performance targets, have demonstrated the importance of studying principals' leadership behaviours as a major factor determining school success (cf. Louis, et al., 2010; Budohi, 2014; Pinto, 2014; Day et al., 2016; Chia & Lia 2017). In relation to this, the leadership styles of principals are an instrument that helps to influence and shape the process and behaviour of the school community towards realising better achievements for all the students (Hallinger, 2011).

More importantly, most researchers have considered only task and relationship-oriented behaviours in their analysis of school effectiveness, while school leaders themselves have in fact exhibited changed behaviours in accomplishing their leadership goals. Consequently, there is a shortage of studies that have considered the effect of all three meta-categories (task, relationship, and change-oriented behaviours) in the field of school leadership and management. Such observed discrepancy in the field makes this study important; as it may contribute to resolving the existing lack of conceptual clarity in the category of leadership orientation and contradictory findings on the most effective type of leadership orientation that enhances better student performance.

2. Objectives and a hypothesis for the study

Taking this context into consideration, the objective of the study was to identify the most effective type of principal's leadership behavioural orientation that has a positive effect on students' academic performance in secondary schools in the Gedeo zone of Ethiopia. To achieve the above objective, the research question was posed as follows: **Which type(s) of principals' leadership behavioural orientation has/have a positive effect on students' academic performance in the secondary schools of Gedeo zone, Ethiopia?**

According to Cohen et al., (2007), "an alternative way of operationalising research questions takes the form of hypothesis raising and hypothesis testing" (p. 82). In

line with this, we have set a hypothesis as an additional tool to guide our enquiry with the intention of detecting the type and direction of relationship behavior that exists between each type of principal's leadership orientation and students' academic performance. The following hypothesis with respect to the effect of a principal's leadership orientation on the academic performance of students (to be rejected or confirmed by analysing the data collected for this purpose) was phrased:

H1: All three types of principals' leadership orientation (task, relationship, and change) yield a statistically significant academic achievement of students in the secondary schools of Gedeo zone in Ethiopia.

3. The Literature review

Leadership behaviours, in the broadest sense, refer to the style leaders exhibit in work that exclusively scrutinises what they do, and how they act in the process of directing people, implementing plans, or motivating followers in pursuit of the goals commonly agreed on (cf. Mullins, 2005; Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2013). In a school context, the study of leadership behaviours is concerned with what the principals do regarding their respective activities, roles, and responsibilities; and, in addition, how they act instead of searching for the trait or personality characteristics endowed by nature (Yukl, 2010, Northouse, 2016).

Leadership behaviours exhibited by a leader at work are important for ensuring a smooth and effective functioning of an organisation and attaining shared goals. Many educational researchers offered evidence of a positive correlation between student academic success and effective leadership behaviours of principals (cf. Brady, 2012; Day et al., 2016; Cruickshank, 2017; Chia & Lia, 2017). Such research findings made the study of leadership behaviour a major focus point for researchers in this field; since it is believed to be significant for increasing personal, as well as organisational satisfaction and performance of employees (Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2016). Since the leadership style affects aspects, such as the acceptance of decisions, the commitment of stake holders, the satisfaction and productivity of the school, principals must select the appropriate behaviour for the existing context (Botha, 2012). In this sense, the leadership behaviours exhibited by school principals should be appropriate, in order to exert a positive influence on the behaviours of teachers, students, parents and the other stakeholders.

The main period of behavioural approaches to leadership occurred between 1945 with the Ohio State and Michigan studies and the mid-1960s, with the development of the Managerial Grid (cf. Mullins, 2005; Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2016). During this period, most scholars specified two broad dimensions of leadership behaviours that incorporate task accomplishment and satisfy the personal and organisational needs of followers. Task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership behaviours are therefore a foundation for various types of leadership styles. This dichotomy is multi-faceted, referring to the way in which power is distributed and decisions are made on what needs should be met.

Regarding this point, Bass (1990) relates the features of autocratic and democratic leadership styles to task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviours. Furthermore, Bass (1990) has shown that the autocratic cluster of behaviours refers to the performance dimension, while the democratic cluster denotes the maintenance dimension.

Even though the two-factor dichotomy discussed above encompasses many leadership styles, it fails to consider change-oriented behaviours that are concerned with encouraging and facilitating change, innovation and emotional commitment to the mission of the unit (Yukl, 2010). Furthermore, Yukl (2010) elaborated that by the 1980s, change-oriented behaviour was implicit in some theories of charismatic and transformational leadership. Change-oriented leadership behaviours, as a third meta-category, was mentioned independently in the 1990s by researchers in Sweden (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991) and in the United States (Yukl, 1999a). Each of the three meta-categories of leadership has a different primary purpose. As stated by Yukl (2010), task-oriented leadership behaviour is primarily concerned with accomplishing the task in an efficient and reliable way, while relations-oriented behaviour is concerned with increasing mutual trust, cooperation, job satisfaction and identification with the organisation. Likewise, the third meta–category of change-oriented behaviour, is primarily concerned with understanding the environment, finding innovative ways to adapt to it and implementing the major changes in strategies, products, or processes.

In accordance with this development, the early fixation on considering and initiating a leadership structure appears to have come to an end, as many researchers now examine a broader range of behaviours and types of behaviours that are more specific (Yukl, 2010). Indeed, the classification of the leadership behaviours of task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and change-oriented is a generalised taxonomy that is functional in all types of organisations in a similar way.

Most researchers (cf. Armstrong, 2009; Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2016) who have conducted studies on the effect of leadership orientation on employees' performance have merely deliberated task and relationship behaviours, overlooking change-oriented behaviours, which school principals are practicing continually in their leadership roles. Evidently, Northouse (2016) stated that "*whenever leadership occurs, leaders are acting out both task and relationship behaviours, although in some situation they need to focus on task, whereas in others condition, they may give more emphasis for relationship*" (p.83). Based on an overall pattern of research findings, Yukl (2010) asserts that 'high-task' and `high-relationship' oriented leadership behaviours tend to be more effective, even though concentrating on one type of behaviour and less on the others, could also make the organisation effective in specific situations. According to Yukl (2010), depending on circumstances, both styles could lead to an increase in the performance and productivity.

From the discussion above it is evident that change-oriented leadership behaviours, recently mentioned and discussed by various scholars as a third meta-category, is indeed exhibited as a leadership behaviour in practice. There are, however, limited research findings that have considered the impact of all three

meta-categories of leadership behaviour (task, relationship and change-oriented) on the academic achievement of students.

In spite of various attempts made by researchers, no consensus has been reached regarding what principals need to do to be effective in realising the improved academic performance of students. Garland (2018) supports the above comment, when stating that there is consensus about the determination of leaders, but not yet on the type of meta-category of principal leadership behaviour that leads to better student achievement. With the expansion of better understanding of the determinateness of leadership in enhancing the academic performance of students, different issues related to principals' leadership style in becoming an important research topic.

4. Methods
The mixed research method designs were used for this study; because it offers better opportunity to collect, analyse, and interpret quantitative and qualitative data interactively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative approach enabled us to collect quantifiable data and to analyse the data statistically, whereas the qualitative approach helped them to get different perspectives on the respondents of the issue under study. Specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed-method design was employed in this study. In line with the notion of this design, the data were analysed in two separate phases, while the results were triangulated to verify whether the findings of the two phases agreed.

The population of this study was 23 government general secondary schools in the Gedeo zone, comprising 23 school principals, 46 vice-principals, 536 teaching staff, 161 parents-teachers-students-association (PTSA) members, 22, 672 students and 12 district-head supervisors and zone- educational experts (GZED, 2019). Out of the total of 23 secondary schools in the zone, six sampled schools were deliberately selected. The three least-achiever schools and three best-achiever schools of the zone were selected by means of a maximum variation strategy, based on the results of their tenth-grade students in the national examination for the three consecutive years of 2016/17/ 2018/19.

We assumed that the source of variation in percentages of students' pass rate to preparatory education could be determined by the leadership competence (exhibiting appropriate leadership behaviours/styles) of their school principals. The justification given to this assumption is that the government secondary schools of the zone have basic similarities almost in all school-related aspects, such as school infrastructure, teachers' qualifications, socio-economic status of parents, except for the leadership competence of the school principals. Furthermore, we took the necessary measures to minimise the interference of any other extraneous variables. For instance, we excluded private schools from the study, as their context differs from that of the government secondary schools.

A total of 141 teachers and 180 students (n=221) from the sampled schools completed the questionnaires, as part of the quantitative phase of the study data. These respondents were chosen from the six sampled schools by using the proportional stratified sampling technique. This technique enabled us to find a proportional number of respondents that represented the population (Johnson &

Christensen, 2014). In the qualitative phase of the study, the data were collected from six principals and six PTSA chairmen of the sampled schools, and from four district supervisors and two zone-education experts. These participants were deliberately selected; as they could have some knowledge regarding the leadership behaviours of the principals of the sampled schools; as they interact consistently, due to their interdependent work relationships.

Questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis were used to collect relevant data from the participants. The purpose for which we used questionnaires as a data-gathering tool was to collect quantitative data from the large number of respondents. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared separately for teachers and students. Interviews and document reviews were employed to collect the qualitative data to help shed more light on the quantitative results and to cross-check the findings. The interviews were conducted by following the one-on-one approach, as this approach assisted us to ask elaborative questions to justify the respondents' assertions. We recorded the interviews with the consent of the participants, as a back-up to minimise the possible errors during transcription. This occurred anonymously as no individuals' or the school's name was mentioned.

Before starting the actual data-collection process by means of the designed questionnaires, various attempts were made to refine this research instrument. Amendments to the draft questionnaire were made according to the comments of some colleagues, who were capable and willing to assist us technically. Besides this, a pilot study was also conducted at two non-participant schools and an improvement was enacted on the results. Based on the results obtained from the pilot-study, the contents of four items were refined and the language clarity of seven items was improved. The participants were treated in an ethical manner in that we respected their decisions and protected them from any forms of psychological, social, economic and/or physiological harm that could intimidate their well-being. We applied the principles of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants to safeguard their security.

5. The Results
The objective of this study was to examine the effect of principal leadership behavioural orientation on the academic achievements of the students and to identify the effective types of leadership behaviours that could improve the performance of the students. In examining the effect of the principal's leadership behavioural orientation on the students' academic achievements, the recent development in the categorisation of leadership orientations, which broadly divides this into three meta-categories of behaviours, that were actualised (Yukl, 2010).

Accordingly, we included all three meta-categories, namely task-focused, relationship-focused, and change-focused leadership behaviours in the analysis. To examine the effect of the three types of leadership orientations of principals, we used 12 items as indicators. One type of leadership orientation is represented by four selected items in the questionnaire. By keeping this in mind, the

leadership orientations of principals of the sampled schools were analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics in the following sections indicate.

5.1 Descriptive analysis of principals' leadership behavioural orientation
To understand the leadership behavioural orientation of principals in the two groups of schools, the participants were asked to rate the extent to which their school principals frequently exhibited the specified leadership behaviour. Thus, the score obtained by each principal on each item was used as an indication to show the extent to which the school principals valued specific behaviour in their daily leadership practices. Task-oriented leadership behaviours will be discussed, followed by relationship-orientated behaviours and change-oriented leadership behaviours of the two groups analysed comparatively.

As indicated above, the three least-achiever and the three best-achiever schools of the zone were selected deliberately, based on their tenth-grade students' results in national examination in the three consecutive years of 2016/17 to 2018/19. To make the analysis easy and to ensure the anonymity of the participants, a code name was given to each sampled school, as well as to the two groups of schools. The code name *Group 1* **was** given to the category of the three least achievers, whereas the code name *Group 2* was given to the category of the three best-achiever schools of the zone. Likewise, the code name of RLAS-23, RLAS-22 and RLAS-21 have been assigned to the three least achievers; while the code names of RBAS-3, RBAS-2 and RBAS-1 bwasgiven to the three best achiever schools of the zone respectively.

5.1.1 Analysis on the task-oriented leadership behaviours of the principals
As described above, the descriptive analysis of the task-oriented leadership behaviours of the principals was represented by comparing the two categories of the sampled schools, in order to assess whether they showed any difference. To this effect, the score that the sampled schools' principals obtained in the form of mean values and standard deviations were compared, as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Task-oriented leadership behaviours of principals' leadership orientation

Leadership orientation	N0	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURAL ORIENTAION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS				
		Items	Group 1		Group 2	
			M	SD	M	SD
Task-orien**ted** leadership behaviours	1	Set standards of performance & follow up its accomplishment	2.46	1.14	3.67	1.01
	2	Define role & responsibilities of each member	2.56	.739	3.81	.936
	3	Provide plan that specify what task & how it to be done	2.40	1.11	3.79	.896
	4	Aware members about what is expected of them	2.51	.806	3.76	.918
Mean score task-oriented behaviours			2.48	2.05	3.76	1.88

Note: *The code name **Group 1** represents the the three least achievers while the code name **Group 2** represents the the three best achiever schools of the zone*

In item 1 of table 1, the respondents of both groups were asked to identify the extent to which their school principal had achieved the 'set standards of performance for members and monitors of its accomplishment. In their reply, the

respondents in the Group 1 schools revealed that principals rarely did (M=2.46; SD= 1.14), while the respondents in Group 2 replied that the school principals usually did (M=3.67; SD=1.01). From the analysis, it is possible to infer that the principals of the Group 2 schools placed a high emphasis on the specified task, and, as a result they, were better achievers than those from Group 1. This might have been emanated from their ambition to be successful and to control the trends in their school. Some earlier studies, which have been carried out in this field stated that well-organised monitoring practices have a positive effect on enhancing managerial effectiveness (cf. Kim & Yukl, 1995; Amabile et al., 2004).

Engagement of principals in the task of 'defining roles and responsibilities for each member and committee was assessed in item 2 of Table 1. The respondents replied that the principals of the Group 1 schools sometimes engaged in task-defining roles (M=2.56; SD=.739), while the respondents in Group 2 revealed that the principals usually performed the task themselves (M=3.81; SD=.936). This implies that the principals in Group 2 were effective in engaging the entire school community and various committees by prompting them frequently to accomplish their roles and responsibilities adequately. Thus, they were better achievers than the principals in Group 1.

With reference to item 3 in Table 1, the respondents in Group 1 replied that the principals rarely provided a work plan with a clear description of the tasks to be carried out together with details on how the tasks should be carried out (M=2.4; SD=1.1), while the respondents in Group 2 revealed that the principal of their school usually exhibited this specific behaviour (M=3.79; SD=.896). With reference to this point, Yukl (2010) illustrated that even a subordinate, who is highly competent and motivated may fail to achieve a high level of performance if he or she is confused about his/her responsibilities and priorities. This implies that the principals in Group 2 performed better than the principals in Group 1 in keeping the school community on the right track by using a work plan that encompasses a clear description of the tasks to be carried out together with details on how this needs to be done.

With reference to item 4 of Table 1, the respondents replied that the principals in the Group 1 schools reminded the school members about what was expected of them sometimes (M=2.51; SD= .806), while the respondents in Group 2 replied that their school principals often exhibited the specified behaviour (M=3.76; SD= .918). Regarding the importance of clarifying the expectations for managerial effectiveness, various earlier studies have found a positive relationship between clarifying expectation and managerial effectiveness (cf. Bauer & Green, 1998; Kim & Yukl, 1995). Depending on the results of the analysis, it is possible to infer that the principals of Group 2 were effective in making the school community contribute to the schools; as these principals frequently reminded them of what was expected of them.

In complementing these quantitative data, qualitative data were gathered from the principals, district supervisors, chairmen of PTSA and zone education experts. The supplementary qualitative data were collected and analysed with the aim of

counterchecking whether the result obtained from the qualitative approach match the quantitative findings of the study. Thus, the qualitative data collected through interviews and some facts collected from documents were analysed to determine whether the participants' opinions, beliefs and perceptions supplement the results obtained in the quantitative phase of the data analysis.

In order to identify the useful and justifiable types of principal leadership, behavioural orientations that help to enhance better students' achievements; the next interview question was raised: "In your opinion, which meta-category of leadership behaviours do school principals need to enhance better academic achievement of their students? And why?" Depending on the response given by the interviewees, it could be possible to organise their answer under three different sets of views.

The largest proportion of participants (55.5 %) stressed the importance of putting high emphasis on the task, above average emphasis for the relationship and average emphasis for change-oriented behaviours in descending order from high to low. For instance, the response given by P-6 was presented here, as it could signify those participants who argued for the importance of emphasising task-oriented behaviours. P-6 suggested, "*To be effective, principals should spend more time on task-oriented behaviours like setting plan, organising the work and the people, directing the people and controling the teaching-learning process*". A proponent of this view argued that when principals frequently exhibit task-oriented behaviours, the school community becomes alert of what is expected of them in improving students' academic achievement. Generally, the following major concepts were synthesised from the interviewee's responses:
- Principals have to prioritise the accomplishment of the teaching-learning task, as it is the major objective for which the school has been established.
- The task first, relationship second and change third view could not work as a rigid rule, but it can be reversed in accordance with the need.

5.1.2   *Analysis on the relationship-oriented leadership behaviours of principals*
The relationship-oriented leadership behaviours of school principals were analysed by comparison to identify whether the two groups of school principals emphasised the specified behaviours at a similar or different rate. To this effect, the score given for items number 5 to 8 by the respondents regarding the principals of the sampled schools were compared, using mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 2: Analysis of relationship-oriented leadership behaviours of principals

Leadership orientation	No	Relationship-oriented leadership behaviours of principals				
		items	Group-1		Group2	
			M	SD	M	SD
Relationship-Oriented Leadership behaviours	5	Concern for the well-being of members	3.25	.705	3.32	1.08
	6	Communicate actively with members	2.76	1.09	3.36	.969
	7	Help members to get along each other	3.13	.667	3.36	.951
	8	Respond happily to comments of the stakeholders	3.13	.629	3.33	.951
Mean score on relationship-oriented behaviours			3.07	1.76	3.34	1.98

Note: *The code name **Group 1** represents the the three least achievers while the code name **Group 2** represents the the three best achiever schools of the zone*

The results of the analysis showed that the principals of all the sampled schools of the best and least achiever schools sometimes exhibited relationship-oriented behaviours (moderate emphasis given to relationship) in a similar way. This can be seen from the overall mean score on the relationship-oriented behaviours of Group 1 (M=3.07; SD=1.76) and Group 2 (M=3.34; SD=1.98). For instance, with reference to the well-being of the school community (item 5), the respondents of both groups replied that the principals of their schools `sometimes' emphasised their need. This is evident from the mean scores (M=3.25; SD=0.84) of Group 1 and that of Group 2 (M=3.32; SD=1.08). It implies that both groups of respondents were partially satisfied with the emphasis placed on their well-being.

Similarly, with reference to item 6, the respondents in both Group 1 (M=2.76; SD=1.04) and Group 2 (M=3.36; SD=.969) revealed that the principals `sometimes' communicate with the school community. Likewise, engagement of principals in helping members to get along with each other (item 7) was rated 'sometimes' by both Group 1 (obtaining a mean score of M=3.13; SD=817) and Group 2 (obtaining a mean score of M=3.36; SD=.951). With reference to item 8, the respondents of both groups verified that the principals 'sometimes' respond favourably to the suggestions of the school members, with Group 1 obtaining a mean score of (M=3.13; SD=.793) and Group 2 obtaining a mean score of (M=3.33; SD=.951).

The second group that comprises a moderate proportion of the participants (33.33%) advised secondary school principals to give the highest emphasis for relationships than for tasks or change behaviours. The participants in this group proposed high relationship and average change and task-oriented behaviours with the assumption that satisfied staff would show high commitment to realising better achievement of students. They further argued that exhibiting high task behaviours may not be helpful, as high school teachers are educated and they are mature enough to guide themselves.

5.1.3   Analysis of change-oriented leadership behaviours of principals
The change-oriented behaviours of principals in the two categories of schools were analysed and compared to identify whether it differs in the two sets of groups. Based on the perception of the respondents, the scores given to the principals of the sample schools for items number 9 to 12 were compared in terms of mean values and standard deviations.

Table 3: Change-oriented leadership behaviours of principal leadership orientation

Leadership orientation	N o	Leadership behavioural orientation of school principals				
		Items	Group-1		Group-2	
			M	SD	M	SD
Change-oriented leadership behaviours	9	Envision exciting new possibilities for the school	2.72	.975	3.61	.935
	10	Encourage a staff to innovate a new work strategy	2.38	1.06	3.6	.929
	11	Interpret events to explain a need for urgent change	2.76	1.01	3.45	.979
	12	Encourage the staff to brought major change	2.78	1.04	3.54	1.02
Mean score of change- oriented behaviours			2.66	2.02	3.55	1.93

Note: *The code name **Group 1** represents the the three least achievers while the code name **Group 2** represents the the three best achiever schools of the zone*

As evident from item 9 in table 3, the respondents were asked to verify the extent to which the principals of their schools envisage exciting new possibilities for the school. The respondents in Group 1 responded that the principals sometimes exhibited the specified behaviour (M=2.72; DS=.987), whereas the respondents in Group 2 replied that the principals of their schools frequently exhibited this behaviour (M=3.61; DS=.935). The result implies that the principals of the best achiever schools were actively searching for new possibilities and initiating the school community to use these with the emerged opportunity, in order to bring about change, and to realise the success of the school.

The respondents of Group 1 replied that the principals of their schools rarely encouraged the school community to innovate a new work strategy (M=2.38; SD=1.06), while the respondents in Group 2 replied that the principals of their schools frequently engaged in this specified leadership behaviour (M=3.60; DS=.929). This implies that the teachers and other members in Group 2 have the freedom of proposing and exercising new ways of thinking; and they were effective in motivating staff for the innovation of new strategies. Regarding this point, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) stated that to be effective, principals need to serve as catalysts to unleash potential capacities, which already exist in the staff and other members. With reference to item 11, the respondents replied that the principals of both Group 1 and Group 2 sometimes interpreted new events to explain a need for urgent change with mean scores of (M=2.76; DS=1.01) and (M=3.45; DS=.979) respectively.

This result implies that the emphasis on the specific behaviours of principals in both groups differed. With reference to item 12, the respondents replied that the principals of Group 1 `sometimes' (M=2.78; DS=1.04) encouraged the staff to bring about major change, while the respondents asserted that the principals of Group 2 schools `frequently' engaged in the specified leadership behaviours (M=3.54; DS=1.02). Therefore, it is fair to say that the teachers in the Group 2 schools are encouraged more to employ innovative ideas than the teachers in the Group 1 schools.

A moderate proportion of informants have asserted that principals must strive to bring about change in all the aspects of the school life, but it should not be done merely for the sake of change; it should also be applied when necessary. Thus,

when there is clear purpose and adequate reasons, principals could emphasise changed behaviours.

There was a small proportion of participants (11.11 %) who argued for equality of emphasis to all the three meta-categories of leadership behavioural orientation. They believed that the principals should exhibit all the three meta-categories of behaviours in equal magnitude in their daily work. They advised the principals to put equal emphasis on all three meta-categories of leadership behaviours in all the contexts.

The data extracted from document analysis revealed the presence of visible differences in the leadership orientation of Group 1 and Group 2 school principals. For instance, slogans, pictures as well as motivational quotations mounted in the whole of Group 1 schools are urging stakeholders to hold up positive interpersonal relationships, while in the case of Group 2 schools such document insist that the school community should bring about change and ensure the culture of hard work. Furthermore, the document reviewed of the participant schools revealed that principals of Group 2 schools to perform better in preparing and implementing strategic plans than the principals of Group 1 schools implemented.

5.2 Analysis of principal-leadership behavioural orientation (PLBO) with inferential statistics and a hypothesis test
In this section, the analysis of principal-leadership orientation has been treated by associating each style with the effect it has on improving students' academic achievement. The analysis was carried out with the help of inferential statistics. Firstly, the mean scores of the principals of the three least and the three best achiever schools of the zone were calculated, based on the degree of emphasis they have given for task-, relationship- and change-oriented leadership behaviours. Simultaneously, the percentages of students who secure minimum pass marks in the tenth-grade national exams in three consecutive years were computed for these schools; and they were used as dependent variables of the study. Secondly, the associations between dependent and independent variables were examined with multiple line-graphs, by using the same data.

Finally, the research question that was phrased earlier was examined by means of inferential statistics, followed by the analysis of the related hypothesis for the study. The results are presented in Table 4 below. The table illustrated the extent to which the principal of each sampled school focused on task-, relationship- and/or change-oriented behaviours in juxtaposition with the percentage of students who had succeeded in joining the preparatory schools in the last three years.

Table 4: Summary of Leadership Behavioural Orientation of School Principals

No	Leadership Orientation	score	Summary of Leadership Behavioural Orientation of School Principals							
			Group-1 score per school			Group-1 score	Group-2 score per school			Group-2 score
			RLAS-23	RLAS-22	RLAS-21		RBAS-3	RLAS-2	RLAS-1	
1	Task-oriented Behaviours	M	2.44	2.48	2.53	2.48	3.67	3.76	3.84	3.76
		SD	2.10	1.94	2.1	2.05	1.94	1.91	1.78	1.88

2	Relationship-oriented behaviours	**M**	3.05	3.03	3.11	3.07	3.27	3.32	3.47	3.34
		SD	1.81	1.79	1.71	1.76	1.9	2.07	1.91	1.98
3	Change-oriented Behaviours	**M**	2.64	2.57	2.74	2.66	3.43	3.53	3.73	3.55
		SD	2.14	1.74	2.11	2.02	1.86	1.04	1.85	1.93
Percentage of students' able to pass & join preparatory level			29.56	30.62	35.95	-	58.16	61.13	66.68	-
Rank out of 23 Secondary School			23rd	22nd	21st	-	3rd	2nd	1st	-

Note: *The code name **Group 1** represents the the three least achievers while the code name **Group 2** represents the the three best achiever schools of the zone*

In item 1 above, the engagement of principals in task-oriented behaviours in the two categories of schools were assessed. The data revealed an unequal level of emphasis on task-oriented leadership behaviours of principals of the least and the best achiever schools. The engagement of principals in Group 1 schools on task-oriented leadership behaviours was rated as rare. This can be revealed from the mean score of Group 1 (M=2.48, SD=2.05). However, the Group 2 schools respondents rated the frequent engagement of principals in task-oriented behaviours. This can be ascertained from the mean score of Group2 (M=3.76, SD=1.8).

This result indicated that there was more emphasis on the task-oriented role of the principals of Group 2 schools in realising better student achievement. This implies that high emphasis on task-oriented behaviours could enable principals to realise better student achievements.

The summarised data on the engagement of principals in the two categories of schools in terms of relationship-oriented behaviours revealed moderate emphasis on relationship-oriented behaviours by principals in both categories. This can be identified from the mean score of Group 1 (M=3.07, SD=1.76) and the mean score of Group 2 (M=3.34, SD=1.98). This ascertained occasional engagement by all the sampled school principals. This implies that it is difficult to infer whether frequent engagement-relationship behaviours result in better student achievement.

Item 3 of Table 4 illustrates the summarised result of change-focused behaviours of principals in the two categories of schools. The rating given for engagement of all the principals of Group 1 in change-oriented behaviours was occasional, while the rating score of two principals out of the three revealed 'frequent' engagement in the Group 2 best achievers category. As the result of this, the mean score of principals for change-oriented behaviours revealed occasional engagement (M= 2.66, SD=2.2) for Group 1, whereas the score of Group 2 principals (M=3.55, SD=1.93) revealed frequent involvement of leaders in change-oriented activities. From this result, it can be assumed that there is a positive relationship between increasing change-oriented behaviours of principals' and the improvement of students' achievements.

To supplement the above analysis that was carried out by using inferential statistics regarding the relationship between principals' leadership orientation

and students' performance in the two groups of schools of the zone, the next figure illustrates the associational trend observed between the two variables considered in this study. According to Cohen et al., (2007), "multiple *line graphs are useful for showing trends in continuous data on several variables in the same graph*" (p. 507). With this understanding, the trends of the three meta-categories of behavioural orientation of principals are visualized graphically by representing them with three different lines in the graph. In the graph, the names of the sampled schools are indicated on the 'x' axis, while the score obtained for each type of behavioural orientation is pointed on the 'y' axis. The trends of the three behavioural orientations of the principals of the least and best achiever schools are graphically illustrated in Figure 1 below.
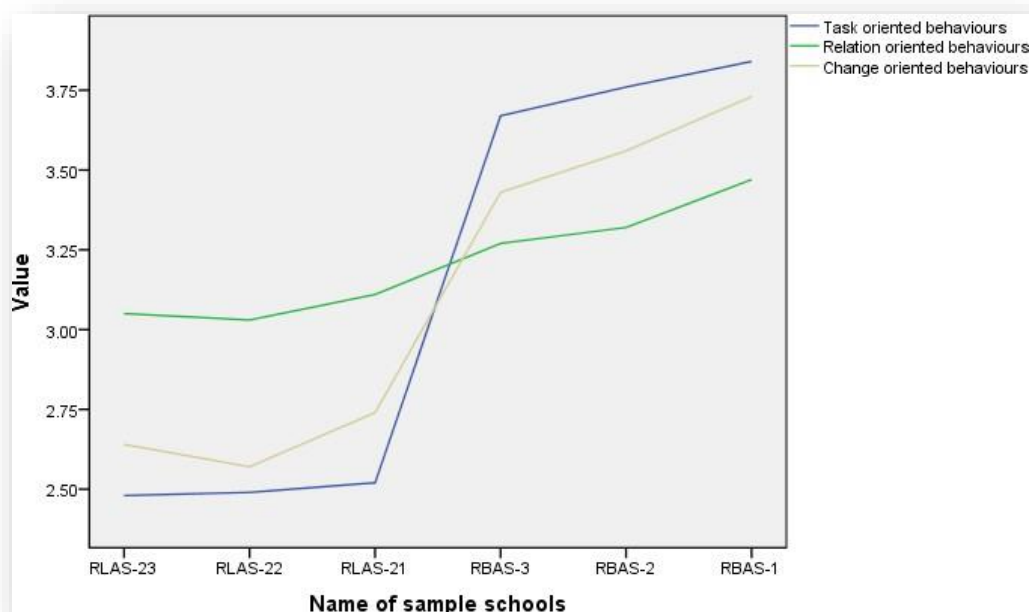

Figure 1: Line graph shown the behavioural orientation of the principals of the sampled schools

The above line graph visualises the trends in the three types of leadership orientation in the least achiever schools of RLAS-23, RLAS-22, and RLAS-21 and that of Group 2 schools indicated as RBAS-3, RBAS-2, and RBAS-1. As can be observed from the above graph, the overall engagement of the best achiever schools in all the three mega-categories of leadership behaviours (task, relationship, and change) exceed those principals of the least-achiever schools of the zone. This means that the principals of the best-achiever schools were active in exerting influence on their followers. The overall leadership orientation of principals in the best- and the least-achiever schools of the zone, illustrated by the above line graph, which exhibits the degree of emphasis they gave to the task, relationship and change behaviours described here comparatively.

- The principals of the least achiever schools put the highest emphasis on relationship behaviours, whereas the principals of the best-achiever category put the lowest emphases on the relationship behaviours. The line

graph representing relationship-oriented behaviours is almost as it appears horizontally, which implies the degree of emphasis on the specified behaviours is similarly moderate in both groups of schools.

- However, with reference to task-oriented leadership behaviours, the principals of the least- achiever schools engaged minimally, whereas the principals in the best-achiever category exhibiedt task-oriented behaviours at the highest level.
- With respect to the change-oriented leadership behaviours in both groups of schools, it becomes clear that in best-achiever schools, top priority is given to the tasks, while in the least-achiever schools, where the top priority is given to relationships. The group of least- achiever schools showed a declining, or slowly increasing trend, while the best-achiever category showa fast-increment.
- By placing higher emphasis on task- and change-related behaviours, principals of the best achiever schools succeed in realising better academic performance of the students. The graph visualises that the principals of the best-achiever schools are more influential than those of the least-achiever schools in all types of leadership orientation. This implies that principals in Group 2 are more decisive than those in Group 1, who illustrate passiveness in their actions.

5.3 Analysis on principals' leadership orientation and hypothesis testing
In addition to the above, line graph, computing the correlation between the dependent and independent variables and testing a related hypothesis with appropriate inferential statistics helped us to draw a conclusion. (See the regression result in the table below).

Table 5: Regression Result on Leadership Behavioural Orientation

Orientation	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	R^2	Adjusted R^2
C	-0.201640	0.017235	-11.69958	0.0000	0.86	0.85
Relationship	-0.003043	0.002506	-1.214153	0.2256		
Task	0.015571	0.002169	7.178986	0.0000**		
Change	0.007654	0.000710	10.77711	0.0000**		

Table 5 above clearly shows that more engagement in relationship behaviour negatively affects students' academic achievement by almost 0.3%, provided that other factors are equal. However, the probability value (p=0.2256) indicates that there is no statistical evidence on whether the effect of such behaviour is significant. In conclusion, relationship-oriented leadership behaviour had a negative impact on students' academic achievement, although the effect was insignificant.

However, task and change-oriented leadership behaviours could more likely affect the academic achievement of students positively. In the case of task-oriented leadership behaviour, the coefficient 0.015571 showed that an increase in task-leadership behaviour by 1% could add 1.5% increase in students' achievement. Similarly, change-oriented leadership behaviour affects students' achievement by

0.7%. The probability values (p=0.0000) for both orientations confirmed that there is a strong statistical evidence that task- and change-oriented leadership behaviours have a significant effect on students' academic achievement. It can be inferred from the coefficients 0.015571 and 0.007654 of the task and change behaviours respectively; and this implies that an increase in these two types of leadership could yield statistically significant improvement in students' achievements.

Hence, with statistical evidence, it is possible to infer that task- and change-oriented leadership behaviours have a positive effect on students' achievement, although no evidence was found on whether the relationship behaviour of leadership affect students' achievement. In general, the positive hypothesis that was stated as 'all types of principals' leadership orientation (task, relationship and change) yield a statistically significant academic achievement of students in the secondary schools of Gedeo zone' is rejected, as there was no statistically significant positive correlation found between the relationship-oriented leadership behaviors of principals and the academic achievement of students (r = -0.003043, ρ = 0.2256).

6. Discussion of the findings

In this sub-section, the findings obtained from the descriptive and inferential analysis of empirical data, content review of qualitative data and literatures reviewed with respect to the impact of principals' leadership orientation (task, relationship, and change behaviours) on students' achievement are presented.

Principals who put more emphasis on task-behaviours are generally more likely to exert a positive effect on the behaviours, thoughts, and actions of the school community, which, in turn, contributes to realising a better academic achievement of students. Comparatively, the principals of Group 2 schools put high emphasis on task-behaviours, which enabled them to achieve better results in students' learning, as focusing on the core activities of their teaching and learning roles make the school community to perform more effectively, Such task-oriented behaviours of Group 2 principals may emanate from their strong sprit of success, and the ambition they have to control the trends in their respective schools (cf. par. 5.5.3.1).

The findings obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed the presence of a strong positive bond between exhibiting task-oriented behaviours and the improvement of students' achievement. The regression result of (r=0.015571; p=0.0000) obtained from the quantitative data analysis showed that when school principals increase task-oriented behaviours by 1%, it could yield 1.5% improvement in student achievement (cf. par. 5.5.3.2).

In the same way, the findings obtained from qualitative data analysis also indicated that exhibiting task-oriented behaviours help to exert a positive influence on the behaviours and actions of the school community, so that they work together to enhance better student achievement. Many interviewees suggested that principals spend more time on task-oriented behaviours, like setting up a plan, organising work and people, directing people, and controlling

the teaching-learning process and encouraging the school community to realise better student achievements. Most interviewees argued that when the principal frequently exhibits task-oriented behaviours, the school community would become more attentive to what is expected of them and will therefore contribute to the improvement of the academic achievement of students (cf. par. 5.6.4).

Furthermore, by supplementing the results mentioned above, the findings obtained from document review of the sample schools indicated that principals of the Group 2 (best achiever) schools exhibited more task-oriented leadership behaviours than the principals of Group 1 schools. For instance, a review of the school minutes of Group 2 schools indicated lists of different committees with specific duties and responsibilities which is indicative of provision of in-school training, as well as a checklist to control accomplishment and discussions on the performance reports of many sections revealed that principals in the best achiever category exhibited task-oriented behaviours (cf. par. 5.6.4).

The results obtained from descriptive analysis indicated that task-oriented behaviours exhibited by Group 1 and Group 2 principals were entirely different. The results generally indicated low engagement of Group 1 principals on task-behaviours, while Group 2 schools principals engaged at a higher level. Specifically, in terms of 'providing a plan specifying the task and how it is done', 'define role and responsibilities of each member' and 'setting standards of performance and monitoring members' accomplishment, Group 2 principals have exhibited high task-oriented leadership behaviours. High emphasis on task behaviours offers the opportunity to initiate work, direct members towards the designed goals and the monitoring of members' performance, which, in turn, enhances2 better student achievement (cf. par. 5.5.3.1).

The relationship-oriented behaviour has a negative effect on students' academic achievement, although this effect is insignificant. High emphasis on relationship behaviours could not result in the improvement of academic achievement of students. In this study, the results obtained from the computed regression coefficient (r=-0.0030043, p=0.2256) revealed that an increased engagement in relationship behaviour by 1%, negatively affected students' academic achievement by almost 0.3%. Furthermore, the probability value (p=0.2256) indicated that there was no statistical evidence of whether the effect of such behaviour is significant (cf. par. 5.5.3.2).

Exhibiting relationship-oriented behaviours may not have a direct impact on students' achievement. Slightly different findings were found from the qualitative data analysis of relationship-oriented behaviours. Most interviewees argued that apart from task-behaviours, principals put the second-most emphasis on relationship-behaviours to be effective, although the results obtained from the quantitative data analysis revealed principals' high or low engagement in relationship behaviours did not make any difference to students' achievement. Evidently, the emphasis on relationship behaviours by Group 1 and Group 2 school principals was moderate; however, by nullifying the influence of relationship behaviours, the student' achievement scores were significantly

different in the two groups of schools. Thus, the incompatibility of the findings obtained from the two types of data analysis made us cautious about the importance of keeping relationship behaviours only at a reasonable level of emphasis.

Increased engagement in change behaviour could result in increased student achievement. The results obtained from the computed regression coefficient of (r=0.007654; p=0.0000) indicated that when a change-oriented leadership behaviour increases by 1%, students' achievements' increase by 0.7%. The result of the analysis indicated that change-focused behaviours of Group 1 principals rated as 'moderate', while that of Group 2 principals rated `higher'. This indicates that there is a direct relation between change-oriented behaviours of principals and students' achievement (cf. par. 5.5.3.2).

The results summarised from the qualitative data analysis indicated that principals must strive towards bringing about change in all aspects of the school life, but it should not merely be done for the sake of change only; it should only be applied when necessary. Thus, when there are clear purpose and adequate reasons, principals could put high emphasis on changed behaviours. Specifically, regarding 'envisaged exciting new possibilities for the school', Group 1 principals exhibited average emphasis, while Group 2 principals' engaged highly in specified leadership roles. This implies that the principals of Group 2 schools were actively searching for new possibilities and initiating members to engage in the emerged opportunities. In terms of 'encouraging members to innovate new strategies, the emphasis given by Group 1 principals was low, while Group 2 principals' engagement rated higher. This implies that members in best achiever schools are encouraged to think out of the box and to exercise innovated strategies (cf. par. 5.6.4).

Furthermore, the relationship between principals' leadership orientation and students' achievement in the least and best achiever categories of schools that were examined with the help of three separate line graphs indicated in figure 1 and its summarised findings are discussed below. From the results it is visualised by the three separate lines, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Principals of Group 2 schools did better than the principals of Group 1 schools in their engagement in all three types of leadership categories, although the difference observed in terms of relationship behaviour appears to be insignificant. The line graphs indicated that the principals of Group 2 schools were more active than the principals of Group 1 schools. This implies that the principals of best-achiever schools are more influential than the principals of the least-achiever schools. The findings obtained from the analysis of the data revealed the necessity of offering a moderate and above-average emphasis on all types of leadership orientations that include task-, change- and relationship-behaviours to be effective in realising better achievements of the students. Particularly, high emphasis on task- and change-oriented leadership behaviours could yield higherz return in terms of students' academic achievements (cf. par. 5.5.3.2).

The graph also illustrated that the emphasis by principals of Group 2 on task and changed behaviours were high. This implies that high emphasis on task- and change-behaviours may help to realise better academic achievements. The line graph that represented relationship behaviours ascertained a moderate level of engagement of both groups. This indicated that there is no direct relation between relationship behaviours and students' achievements, as the same degree of emphasis resulted in a different level of student achievement.

From the findings, we can assume that Group 1 principals engaged in task-accomplishment and initiating change at lower levels to minimise challenges that may encounter them if they exhibit high task and change behaviours. Thus, it is being reasonable if someone correlates high engagement of principals in accomplishment of tasks and endorsement of change with better student achievements.

7. Recommendations
Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data of this study and an understanding gained from the review of previous related studies, recommendations were made on how principals' leadership orientation could yield higher students' academic performance.

- Principals have to prioritise (emphasis) the accomplishment of the teaching-learning process, as it is the major objective; the school is established for high emphasis on task behaviours, which helps school principals to succeed, as it affords them the opportunity to initiate the work of direct members towards the specified goals and enable them to monitor community members' performance. When school, principals exhibit task-oriented behaviours, the school community becomes vigilant for what is expected of them; and consequently by doing as expected, students' academic achievement is realised in the process (cf. par. 5.6.4).
- Principals are required to spend more time on task-oriented behaviours, such as setting a vision, planning, organising work and people, directing people, and controlling the teaching-learning process (cf. par. 5.5.3.1).
- Principals need to be aware that high relationship-oriented leadership behaviours may obstruct students' achievements, unless there is a concrete reason to do so. Thus, they should not unnecessarily exhibit high relationship behaviours simply for the purpose of being liked and to avert challenges that they may encounter (cf. par. 5.5.3.2).
- Even though, principals' engagement in relationship behaviours, such as ' emphasising the well-being of the school community', 'helping school members to get along with one another', 'communicating actively with members' and 'responding favourably to the comments of stakeholders' may not directly make a difference to students' achievements; since it is a necessary condition for improving emotional integrity in the school Thus, school principals are required to put reasonable emphasis on relationships and behaviours (cf. par. 5.6.4).
- Although exhibiting high relationship behaviours, merely for the purpose of getting affiliation from the school community, may not bring about performance   improvement,   satisfying   members'   needs   without

compromising the work to be done, in order to enable the school principals to secure co-operation and emotional integrity.

- Principals must strive towards bringing about change in all aspects of the school life; but it should not be done merely for the sake of change itself; it should be done only when necessary. Thus, when there is clear purpose and adequate reasons, principals need to put high emphasis on change behaviours.
- When principals actively search for new possibilities and initiate the school community needs to use these, should the need arise; they may support their school by increasing the productivity of members that might improve students' achievements. Similarly, putting high emphasis on change behaviour or 'envisioning exciting new possibilities for the school' and 'encouraging members to innovate new work strategies, in order to inspire members to think out of the box, and to apply new strategies, which would pave the ways for increasing student achievements (cf. par. 5.5.3 & 5.6.4).

8. Conclusion

School principals exhibiting task- and change-focused leadership behaviours may help to improve student achievements, whereas high emphasis on relationship-behaviours may not result in high student performance. High emphasis on task-behaviours enables school principals to succeed, as it gives the opportunity to initiate work, direct members towards specified goals, and help them to monitor staff members' performance. The result of the quantitative data analysis indicated that relationship-oriented behaviour has a negative impact on students' academic achievements, although the effect is insignificant. Thus, putting a high priority on relationship-behaviours may be inversely related with student achievement. Exhibiting high relationship- behaviours merely for the purpose of getting affiliation from the school community may not bring about any improvement in performance; however, satisfying members' needs without compromising the work to be done might enable the school principals to secure co-operation and emotional integrity.

Furthermore, to be effective in realising the better academic performance of students, school principals need to engage actively in all the affairs of the school, although the degree of emphasis on the three meta-categories of leadership behaviours may differ. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that the increasing change-oriented behaviours of school principals could enable them to improve students' achievements, unless the situation merely demands maintenance and not endorsing change. Further research is recommended in future to assess whether the results obtained in this study are found reliable, or not, by repeating the study on a larger scale and in a diversified school context.

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