

HARAMAYA UNIVERSITY
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORATE

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL CULTURE AND PRINCIPALS’
LEADERSHIP STYLES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF GODE CITY
ADMINISTRATION, SOMALI REGIONAL STATE, ETHIOPIA**

M.A. THESIS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO DIRECTORATE FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM
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MARCH, 2026

HARAMAYA UNIVERSITY

STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR

By my signature below, I declare and affirm that this thesis is my own work. I have followed all ethical principles of scholarship in the preparation, data collection, data analysis and completion of this thesis. All scholarly matter that is included in the thesis has been given recognition through citation. I affirm that I have cited and referenced all sources used in this document. Every serious effort has been made to avoid any plagiarism in the preparation of this thesis.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/Abbreviation	Full Meaning
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCA	Gode City Administration
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MoE	Ministry of Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WEO	Woreda Education Office
KII	Key Informant Interview
PD	Professional Development
SD	Standard Deviation
MoE	Ministry of Education
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICTE	Information and Communication Technology in Education
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation (if mentioned in the introduction context of Somali Region)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
EDPM	Educational Planning and Management

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TABLE OF CONTENT

STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR	iii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background of the study	1
1.2. Statement of problem	4
1.3. Research Question	6
1.4. Objective of the study	7
1.4.1. General Objective of the study	7
1.4.2. Specific objectives of the study	7
1.5. Significance of the study	7
1.6. Delimitation of the study	7
1.7. Limitation of the study	8
1.8. Operational Definition of Key Terms	8
1.9. Organization of the study	9
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	10
2.1. Concept and Definition of Culture	10
2.2. Organizational culture	12
2.3. School culture	13
2.3.1. Elements of school culture	15
	vii

2.3.2.	Type of school culture	16
2.4.	Role of School Leaders in creating and shaping school culture	17
2.5.	Relationship between school culture and leadership styles	17
2.6.	Ways of Managing School culture	19
2.7.	Conceptual Framework of the Study	20
3.	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	22
3.1.	Description of the Study Area	22
3.2.	Research Design	23
3.3.	Sources of Data	23
3.3.1.	Primary Data Sources	23
3.3.2.	Secondary Data Sources	23
3.4.	Population, Sampling, and Sampling Procedures	23
3.4.1.	Population of the Study	23
3.4.2.	Sample Size and Sampling Techniques	24
3.5.	Data Collection Instruments	26
3.5.1.	Questionnaire	26
3.5.2.	Interview Guide	27
3.6.	Data Gathering Procedures	29
3.6.1.	Quantitative data analyses	29
3.6.2.	Qualitative data analyses	30
3.6.3.	Integration of quantitative and qualitative data	31
3.7.	Validity and Reliability of the Instruments	31
3.8.	Methods of Data Analysis	32
3.9.	Ethical Considerations	33
4.	RESULT AND DISCUSSION	34

4.1.	Characteristics of respondents	34
4.2.	School culture	35
4.3.	Leadership styles	42
4.4.	Relationships of school culture and leadership styles	46
4.4.1.	Relationships of school culture and Transformational Leadership	46
4.4.2.	Relationships of school culture and Transactional Leadership	48
4.4.3.	Relationships of school culture and Laissez-faire Leadership	49
4.5.	Discussion	51
4.5.1.	Dominant Leadership Styles Practiced by Principals	51
4.5.2.	Dimensions of School Culture	52
4.5.3.	Relationships between Leadership Styles and School Culture	53
4.5.4.	Implications, Limitations, and Comparisons	53
5.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION	55
5.1.	Summary of Major Findings	55
5.2.	Conclusion	57
5.3.	Recommendations	58
	REFERENCES	60
	APPENDIX	69

LIST OF TABLES

Population, sample and sampling technique-----	Error! Bookmark not defined.
School Culture Survey Reliability Coefficients-----	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Leadership style Reliability Coefficients -----	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Characteristics of the Respondents -----	34
Teacher collaboration -----	35
Unity of purpose -----	37
Professional development-----	38
Collegial support -----	40
Learning partnership-----	41
Transformational leadership-----	42
Transactional leadership -----	44
Laissez-faire leadership -----	45
Correlational Matrix for Transformational Leadership and School Culture -----	46
Correlational Matrix for Transactional Leadership and School Culture -----	48
Correlational Matrix for Laissez-faire leadership and School Culture-----	49

LIST OF FIGURES

The relationship between school culture and school leaders leadership style **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

ABSTRACT

The research focused on the relationship between school culture and leadership styles of principals in public secondary schools of Gode City Administration, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia. Using a mixed-methods descriptive survey design, the study collected data from 99 participants, including 90 teachers (census method), 6 principals, and 3 supervisors (purposive sampling). The quantitative data was collected using modified forms of the School Culture Survey (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1997), while the qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The reliability analysis showed Cronbach alpha coefficients between 0.699 and 0.935 for all dimensions of the instruments. The descriptive statistics showed that the transactional leadership style was the most dominant style among the principals ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.908$), followed by transformational leadership ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.08$), and the least dominant was the laissez-faire leadership style ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.999$). The school culture was moderately positive on the five dimensions, with the highest score on professional development ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.808$) and the lowest score on learning partnership ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.942$). The Pearson correlation analysis showed that there were positive correlations between transformational leadership and professional development ($r = .858$, $p < .01$), learning partnership ($r = .682$, $p < .01$), teacher collaboration ($r = .483$, $p < .01$), and collegial support ($r = .301$, $p < .01$). The transactional leadership style was moderately positively correlated with teacher collaboration ($r = .214$, $p < .05$), unity of purpose ($r = .288$, $p < .01$), and professional development ($r = .295$, $p < .01$). The laissez-faire leadership style was not significantly correlated with any of the five dimensions of school culture (all $p > .05$). Qualitative results support that transformational leaders are innovators and builders of partnerships, while transactional leaders are providers of structure and accountability. The findings of this study support that a complementary integration of both leadership styles is the most effective way to improve school culture, while passive leadership has little impact. The major challenges facing this school are teachers who are not adequately qualified (64.7% have qualifications below first-degree level), geographical remoteness, and lack of communication between parents and teachers.

Keywords: school culture, leadership styles, principals, secondary schools, Somali Region, Ethiopia.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers the general overview of the study. It includes the background of the study, which describes the context and the reasons behind the need to examine the relationship between school culture and the leadership styles of principals. In addition, this chapter includes the statement of the problem, research questions, and objectives that direct the study. Moreover, this chapter describes the significance, scope, and delimitation of the research, as well as the operational definitions of the terms used in the thesis. In general, this chapter provides the basis upon which the rest of the study is developed.

1.1. Background of the study

The role of leadership by a principal in an educational organization is critical for creating a positive and productive learning environment for students, teachers, and staff. School leaders have a critically important role in shaping school direction, developing shared vision, and sustaining a positive school culture that supports teaching and learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Syahrul et al., 2024). The success of a leader relies on several factors, such as knowledge and understanding of organizational culture. Organizational cultures not only influence the achievement of long-term goals but also affect the alignment of individual goals with organizational goals. The goals of an organization enable its members to feel the value of their work and create a desire to succeed (Schein, 2017).

The development of organizational culture is a multifaceted process that involves a number of variables, such as socialization, rituals, language, power structures, economic factors, technology, and influence patterns. Each educational institution, such as a school, has its own unique culture shaped by its historical and ongoing processes (Turan & Bektas, 2013). Modern educational institutions are increasingly under pressure to keep up with the pace of change for educational sustainability and global competitiveness. A lack of response to educational changes or a late response can be disastrous for the educational systems of countries (Atasoy, 2020). The achievement of educational objectives within this challenging context is largely dependent on the availability of effective approaches to leadership and school cultures that are compatible with global changes (Bush, 2020; Hallinger & Gümüş, 2020).

Culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and capabilities acquired by individuals as members of society (Schein, 2017). In the context of education, school culture is considered the basic personality of the institution, shaped by norms, values, beliefs, and traditions of its members. Fullan and Quinn (2020) describe school culture as the shared values, beliefs, symbols, traditions, and rituals of the school, developed over time through mutual understanding among the members of the school. Deal and Peterson (2016) also describe school culture as the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals developed over time as people work together, solve problems, and face challenges.

The school culture can be a factor that affects the leadership style of a school leader. In schools with a culture of well-trained and productive employees, the school leader can successfully implement a *laissez-faire* style of leadership, which involves giving autonomy to highly competent employees. On the other hand, a participative or democratic leadership style, which involves the leader working closely with employees to ensure their success, is most appropriate for different employee compositions. Transformational leaders, who focus on the aspects of inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, can have a great impact on the culture of an organization and its change (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Tucker & Russell, 2004).

School leadership is mainly the responsibility of the school principal, who is involved in processes of directing, influencing, and organizing students and employees towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives. Leadership styles are the distinctive ways through which the school principal leads the school community towards the accomplishment of organizational missions (Bush, 2020). There is sufficient evidence that suggests the leadership styles of school principals have important roles in creating and maintaining the culture of schools (Eshete, 2021; Northouse, 2021).

In Ethiopia, the role of school culture has been getting increasing attention in recent years. During the Education Sector Development Programme IV (ESDP IV), the Ministry of Education had a vision of schools as institutions for instilling and developing national consciousness by promoting common ideals, values, aspirations, and loyalties to create national unity and identity in a multi-ethnic state. School culture and ethos were considered key elements for realizing these aspirations, with a view to enabling students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for positive engagement with diverse groups and effective participation in the civic life (MoE,

2021). The ongoing ESDP VI (2021-2025) also gives emphasis to this, with a call for the promotion of positive school culture and ethos with a sense of shared community and collective responsibility (MoE, 2021).

School principals impact and shape school culture through their actions, behaviors, and decisions. Proactive school principals who act as change agents shape school culture through their thinking, acting, and consistent behavior (Briton, 2018). Culture has a profound impact on organizational functioning, which affects stability, cohesion, unity, and adaptability. Researchers have accumulated compelling evidence in support of the assertion that school culture has a significant impact on school outcomes, such as student achievement, teacher commitment, and organizational effectiveness (González, Naranjo, & Calderón, 2023; Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyriakides, 2010).

Leadership style impacts culture and culture also impacts leaders. This is a two-way process, and school culture and leadership have the potential to impact each other in both direct and indirect ways. Enhancing learning and teaching environments is a fundamental responsibility of school principals, who are expected to foster and develop strong school cultures in which students and teachers demonstrate high motivation for learning and teaching (Karadağ & Özdemir, 2015). There has been extensive investigation into leadership styles that enable school principals to develop positive school cultures and learning environments.

The culture of a local school is a crucial determinant of school improvement processes. The embedded practices of school culture have significant effects on the results of principals' improvement actions (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Nehez & Blossing, 2022). School administrators need to use different styles of leadership when dealing with different teaching staff. In addition, the identification of the relationship between school culture and principals' styles of leadership has major implications for improving the quality of education (Schein, 2017). This is especially the case in a diverse nation such as Ethiopia, where school principals need to use different approaches when dealing with teachers, especially in the Somali region's secondary schools where teachers from different cultural settings are employed.

Although the significance of comprehending the relationship between school culture and leadership styles of principals to improve the quality of education has been recognized, there has

been a lack of empirical studies in the Somali Regional State. The current study, therefore, intends to explore the existing relationship between school culture and leadership styles in the secondary schools of Gode City Administration, which will help the school administrators in realizing their visions and objectives in this special context.

1.2. Statement of problem

The role of school leadership and culture is being increasingly acknowledged as a determining factor in the quality of education and achievement of students across the globe (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). The school principal, as the chief administrative authority in a school, has a crucial role to play in determining the organizational culture that either enables or hinders the teaching and learning process (Gümüş, Bellibaş, Esen, & Gümüş, 2021). It has been found that positive school cultures with collaboration, growth, shared vision, and high stakeholder engagement are the result of effective leadership practices (Day & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger & Gümüş, 2020).

In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education has focused on improving schools through different Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs). ESDP VI (2021-2025) clearly states the significance of developing a positive school culture and ethos as basic ingredients for delivering quality education (MoE, 2021). The policy framework conceives schools as spaces where shared values, collaborative approaches, and professional learning communities flourish with the leadership of competent school administrators. But the challenge of implementing these policy ambitions is a major concern, especially in the peripheral parts of the country with their own set of contextual constraints.

The Somali Regional State offers a unique educational environment that is marked by ethnic diversity, pastoralist livelihoods, geographical isolation, and a history of marginalization (USAID, 2022). The secondary schools in Gode City Administration are characterized by the employment of teachers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but with a majority of students from the Somali ethnic group. This multicultural reality gives rise to challenging leadership circumstances, where school principals are faced with varied expectations, communication styles, and professional practices (Oplatka & Arar, 2019). The success of school principals in such situations largely depends on their capacity to adapt to leadership styles that appeal to and impact positively on the prevailing school culture.

Despite the acknowledged significance of the leadership-culture correlation, there is a lack of empirical research in the Somali region. Some studies in Ethiopia have explored this correlation in other settings. Eshete (2021) studied secondary schools in Bishoftu Town Administration and concluded that there were strong correlations between democratic leadership styles and positive school culture, although the implementation of these styles was insufficient. Likewise, Lerra (2020) studied secondary schools in Wolaita Zone and concluded that there were significant correlations between democratic leadership and four prominent types of school culture. Nonetheless, these studies were carried out in agrarian regions with a homogeneous ethnic background and better infrastructure.

The relevance of these results to the Somali regional setting is, however, uncertain for a number of reasons. Firstly, the socio-cultural setting of Somali society, with its clan systems, nomadic movements, and gender roles, presents distinct challenges to school administration that are quite different from those of the highland regions of Ethiopia (UNESCO, 2021). Secondly, the quality of teaching personnel in the Somali region is lower than the national average, with most teachers in secondary schools having diplomas as opposed to the necessary first degrees (MoE, 2022). This disparity in quality may require a different leadership strategy from those in better-endowed regions. Thirdly, the security environment in some parts of the Somali region, characterized by occasional inter-communal conflicts, presents a distinct challenge to school administration that is not present in more secure regions (World Bank, 2023).

Moreover, the existing literature has largely concentrated on the typologies of democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles, without giving much consideration to transformational and transactional approaches that are most prevalent in modern-day international leadership studies (Bush, 2020). The transformational-transactional approach provides more substantial theoretical foundations for explaining the process of leaders' impact on organizational culture based on inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and contingent rewards (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018).

The implications of a lack of understanding of leadership-culture dynamics in the Somali region could be serious. Schools could create cultures that are toxic and characterized by teacher fragmentation, low morale, and poor stakeholder engagement, ultimately affecting the learning outcomes of students (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Teachers in schools with toxic cultures have

higher turnover intentions, lower job satisfaction, and lower teaching effectiveness (Torres, 2019). Students in schools with toxic cultures have lower academic achievement, lower engagement, and lower socio-emotional development (Wang & Degol, 2016). Without evidence that is contextually grounded, school leadership and culture improvement initiatives in the Somali region could be ineffective or even harmful. Gode City Administration, being one of the large urban centers in the Somali region, is a suitable context in which to explore these dynamics. Gode City Administration has a number of secondary schools with different student populations, and the principals are expected to be dealing with all the typical challenges that exist in the region. However, there has not been a systematic investigation of the relationship between principals' leadership styles and school culture in this region, and as such, there is a lack of evidence-based information to inform leadership development, selection, and improvement initiatives in the region.

This study, therefore, fills the following research gaps: (1) there has been a lack of empirical research on school leadership and culture in the Somali region of Ethiopia; (2) there has been a lack of application of transformational-transactional leadership theories in educational research in Ethiopia; (3) there is a need to understand the relationship between multicultural dynamics and leadership-culture associations in peripheral and resource-poor settings; and (4) there is a lack of evidence to inform improvement initiatives for secondary education in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia.

1.3. Research Question

The researcher has attempted to address the following basic questions:

1. What is the dominant Leadership Styles practiced by school principals in Gode City Administration Secondary School?
2. What is the relationship between the existing school culture and leadership styles in Gode City Administration Secondary School?
3. What is the relationship between the Autocratic leadership style and school culture in Gode City Administration Secondary School?
4. Are there statistically significant relationship between principal's leadership styles and school culture?

1.4. Objective of the study

1.4.1. General Objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to explore the relationship between school culture and principal's leadership style in secondary schools of Gode city administration.

1.4.2. Specific objectives of the study

The following are the specific objective of the study.

1. To identify the dominant leadership styles that is being practiced by secondary school principals of Gode City administration.
2. To examine the relationship between Democratic leadership style and school culture
3. To examine the relationship between Autocratic leadership style and school culture
4. To examine the relationship between Laissez-fair leadership style and school culture

1.5. Significance of the study

This study is may be expected to have valuable contributions to educators, principals and supervisors in developing their awareness regarding the importance of school cultures and relationship of school culture and leadership styles. It may also create awareness on the link between leadership style and school culture for facilitating better learning condition. It may serve as a basis for detail and further study for those who have an intention to make research on the effects of school culture on educational leadership styles.

1.6. Delimitation of the study

Geographically, the study was limited to public secondary schools in Gode City Administration, Somali Regional State. Private schools were not included in the study because of their different administrative structures, which might interfere with the relationship between leadership styles and school culture.

Conceptually, the study focused only on five aspects of school culture (teacher collaboration, unity of purpose, professional development, collegial support, and learning partnership) and three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire). Other variables such as teacher motivation, student performance, or community involvement were not within the focus of this study.

Methodologically, the study was a descriptive survey design using questionnaires and interviews with 101 participants (90 teachers, 6 principals, and 3 supervisors). The analysis of the study was limited to descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients. More complex procedures such as regression analysis or structural equation modeling were not used.

1.7. Limitation of the study

Methodological limitations include the use of self-reported data, which could be prone to social desirability bias, and the cross-sectional study design, which does not allow for the determination of causality between leadership approaches and school culture.

Sampling limitations include the small sample (three schools, 101 participants), which is not generalizable, and the dominance of male participants (77.8%), who might not be representative of female teachers' views. The exclusion of private schools adds to the limitation of generalizability.

Contextual limitations include the study's focus on an urban setting, which might not be applicable to rural or pastoral settings in the Somali Region. Security and cultural factors related to authority might have affected the honesty of participants despite assurances of confidentiality.

Conceptual limitations include the narrow focus of the study on chosen variables, which do not consider other leadership styles (for example, distributed leadership or instructional leadership) that might be applicable. Additionally, views of students and parents are not considered.

1.8. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Dominant Culture: currently the existing more dominant traditions norms and beliefs

Leadership: The process of guiding and enlisting the energies and talents of parents, students and teachers towards achievement of common educational goals.

School leader: Refer to head teacher, who leads and is accountable for the secondary schools in Yu`ub secondary school, Ethiopia.

School culture: defined as tradition norms, beliefs, policies, within school that can be enhanced and limited through the school leaders and teacher.

School culture: the ground stream of norms, values, beliefs and traditions and that has built over time as people work together, solve problems and confront activities as a result of school community.

Secondary school: a school system following the primary schooling established to offer general education consists to students from grade 9-12 (MoE, 2021)

1.9. Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, which includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, significance, delimitation, and operational definitions of key terms. The second chapter reviews relevant literature, focusing on the theoretical and empirical foundations of school culture and leadership styles, as well as their interrelationship. The third chapter describes the research design and methodology employed in conducting the study, including the research approach, data sources, sampling techniques, instruments, procedures of data collection, and methods of analysis. The fourth chapter presents and discusses the results obtained from the data analysis in light of the research objectives. Finally, the fifth chapter provides the summary of major findings, conclusions drawn from the results, and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature related to school culture and principals' leadership styles. It presents key concepts, definitions, and theories that form the foundation of the study. The chapter discusses the concept and definition of culture, organizational and school culture, elements and types of school culture, and the role of school leaders in shaping and maintaining it. Furthermore, it examines the relationship between school culture and leadership styles, ways of managing school culture, and concludes with a conceptual framework that guides the present study. The review provides a basis for understanding how previous studies and theoretical perspectives inform the current research.

2.1. Concept and Definition of Culture

The term culture has its roots in social anthropology and is one of the most complex yet basic concepts in deciphering human organizations. Social anthropologists first used the term to define the holistic nature of any given human group, including knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and capabilities acquired by individuals as members of society, that is, passed down from one generation to the next (Tylor, 1871/2021; Brinkman, 1999). The anthropological roots of the term "culture" have very significant implications for managers and leaders operating within and across cultural boundaries, as it offers a paradigm for understanding why organizations behave differently in different contexts (Heskett, 2022; Schein, 2017).

The complexity that is embedded in the concept of culture defies absolute definition, but there are sophisticated understandings that have been developed and can be applied in organizational contexts. Culture is the ideology, perceptions, and systems of assumptions that organizations communicate to their members, as well as the values that give each organization its unique identity and action framework (Theofilidis, 2021; Stergios et al., 2022). At its most fundamental level, culture includes the symbols, myths, rituals, and habits that are shared by members of an organization. Cultural elements exist at different levels, with values, norms, perceptions, and assumptions being the more observable surface level, and the underlying assumptions about human relationships, human nature, and reality being the foundation level that influences organizational behavior (Schein, 2017).

According to Therianos (2021), there are three types of organizational culture. The first type is the individualistic culture, which symbolizes the working reality in which employees work alone without proper communication and cooperation with other staff members, ultimately affecting the efficiency of the organization. The second type is the artificial cooperation culture, which forces employees to work together only in terms of organizational procedures, while the expectations of innovation and improvement are pushed to the side. On the other hand, the genuine cooperation culture promotes effective communication that goes beyond the exchange of information, leading to deep reflection and evaluation that ultimately improves the efficiency of the organization (Therianos, 2021; Stergios et al., 2022).

Organizational culture plays a number of critical roles in the organization. First, it differentiates the organization by creating a unique, independent identity that defines the sense of belonging among its members. Second, organizational culture improves the members' sense of commitment to the organization, which ultimately improves stability through the development of organizational behaviors and attitudes (Hatzipanagiotou, 2020). Third, in a healthy organizational culture, members have higher work consistency and satisfaction, which ultimately reduces burnout and improves commitment to organizational goals (Yakoumis & Theofilidis, 2021).

Culture appears in both external and internal forms. The external form of culture includes elements such as logistical infrastructure, aesthetics, and behavioral patterns. The internal or human side of culture includes invisible elements such as human relationships, feelings of members, and shared values that hold the organization together (Yakoumis & Theofilidis, 2021). These two aspects of culture interact in a constant manner, with the internal aspect ultimately influencing sustainable organizational effectiveness.

In an educational setting, school culture is a specific type of application of these general cultural ideas. Fullan and Quinn (2020) describe school culture as follows: "School culture can be described as the set of beliefs and values that are apparent in the way the school operates. It is the shared expectations, behaviors, and norms that affect organizational performance." Another definition of school culture is offered by Deal and Peterson (2016), who describe it as follows: "The underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges."

Despite being intangible, school culture is observable in terms of celebrations of success, the quality of relationships, and positive interactions. Hallinger and Leithwood (2022) highlight that culture is the source of values that are shared by members of the community, which provides the foundation for educational practice. It is important for educational leaders to understand the cultural foundations in order to create environments that are conducive to teaching, learning, and improvement.

2.2. Organizational culture

Social scientists have explored the notion of organizational culture as a perspective in organizational theory over the past decades. Brown (1998) states that “current interests in organizational culture stems from at least four different sources: climate research, national cultures, human resource management and from conviction approaches which emphasize the rational and structural nature of the organization to be unable to offer a full explanation of organizational behaviour”. The origin of organizational culture from a national culture point of view is based, among others, on the work of Deal and Kennedy (1982). According to this view organizational culture is seen as being central to organizational success rather than factors such as structure, strategy or politics. As a result the attention shifted away from national cultures and focused more on organizational culture.

Arnold (2005) defined organizational culture as a distinctive norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that combine to give each organization its distinct character”. These two definitions suggest that organizational culture distinguishes one organization from another organization. Therefore, organizational culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual (Johnson, 1990). A basic definition of organizational culture is necessary to provide a point of departure in the quest for an understanding of the phenomenon. Martins and Martins (2003, p 380) state the general definition of organizational culture as “a system of shared meaning held by members, distinguishing the organization from other organizations”.

Educational Organizations should be considered socio-technical systems. They are unique organizations whose basic components are the individuals and technology. There is, however, little technology used by educational organizations. Largely, it is the manpower and human resource on whose manipulation they survive and make progress. The individuals constitute, by and large, the most important unit of these organizations. In every society one can find various

types of educational organizations from nursery schools to universities and research organizations besides highly differentiated and complex administrative department's set-up by the governments. These organizations are established for the purpose of achieving certain specific goals. In general, all of them bear a responsibility to impart knowledge to the pupils, develop in them skills and certain human qualities. Some of them are established to train people for certain jobs.

The importance of leadership in management of any educational organization can never be minimized. Achievement of organizational goals very much depends on how effectively leadership is exercised in the organization. Organizational leaders are the key figures who can so change the work climate that all the employees are motivated to work hard with the result that the goals are achieved. On the other hand, there may be leaders who are there in positions but they achieve nothing. Their philosophy of life, their styles of management, their ways of decision-making etc., perhaps, are not conducive to the effective functioning of the institution. And that has been the case with the system of education in our country. We have failed to provide knowledgeable, technically trained and goal-oriented leadership to man our system of education (Pal, p. 131-132).

2.3. School culture

Culture in educational institutions can be defined as a persistent pattern of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions both on and off campus (Roffeei et al., 2016; González, Naranjo & Calderón 2023). According to Muhammed (2009), school culture is a complex web of history, psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. Research during the 1960s and 70s proposed student social background was more significant than schooling as a determinant of their academic outcome (Prosser, 1999; Stergios et al, 2017).

The culture is invisibly felt in the parking lot by visitors, students, parents, and staff members when they enter the parking lot of a school. Not to be confused with climate, a school's culture cannot be forced with a mandate or a set of procedures. According to Gruenert and Valentine (1998), in Stergios et al (2017) the climate of a school is an indicator of how people feel on a normal day in response to an irrelevant stimulus such as an event or the weather. As discussed by

Deal and Peterson (1998), the culture of a school provides a more accurate way to help school leaders better understand their school's unwritten rules and traditions.

In the field of education, school culture is a system of common values and beliefs that shape the identity of the school and are the most important part of the process of improving the educational organization (Kiouisis & Kontakos, 2006; Stergios et al, 2017). In the context of shaping the school culture, the long-term targeting and orientation of the school is achieved and its coherence and unity is achieved by utilizing the functional elements of the culture, such as traditions, rules of conduct, values and the vision of the school (Kythreoti et al., 2010). At the same time, through the school culture, a stability in the environment of the school community is ensured, which contributes to the modern society's demands and difficulties (Kytreiotis et al., 2010) As can be easily understood, school culture cannot be regarded as static but as a dynamic state of operation due to its nature (Kiouisis & Kontakos, 2006; Stergios et al, 2017). Essentially, school culture reflects the values, beliefs and vision of people who are in and working in the school environment, giving identity and character to the school unit (Pasiardi, 2008; Stergios et al, 2017). Creating, empowering, managing and changing school culture is a continuous and difficult process that relies on the effort of all members whose contribution is necessary. However, it is worth noting that the key to shaping the school culture and how it influences the efficiency of each school is considered the leader of each educational organization.

The importance of school culture has been studied in various ways. Over the past couple of decades, studies have been conducted regarding school leadership and culture building. Many leaders in education from the United States and abroad have examined the significance of school culture and its impact on student success, teacher commitment, and teacher performance. The power of school culture has been highlighted within the hallways of many school sites. Culture influences everything that goes on in schools; how staff dress, what they talk about, their willingness to change, and the practice of instruction (Deal & Peterson, 1998; Stergios et al, 2017). Lynch (2016) in Stergios et al (2017) suggested nine characteristics of successful schools and school improvement, including sharing a common goal and vision, teamwork, student assessment, and an engaging school community. Underlying each of these characteristics, however, is a school culture that either energizes or demoralizes them. According to Deal and Peterson (1998), the school's culture plays a central role in exemplary performance. School

culture is a key factor in determining whether improvement is possible (Deal & Peterson, 1998). The influence of culture upon improving schools is very important (Gruenert, 2000; Stergios et al, 2017).

2.3.1. Elements of school culture

According to (Schein E. , 1992) and (Yuki, 2006), cited in Eshete (2023) school culture gives a sense of formal identity and draws a way for organizational processes through legends, rituals, meanings, values and norms. These elements can be seen in school culture as identity of the school.

Values: The values and actions of individuals in the organization are measured and evaluated. Values are wider and tighter when compared to norms. To legitimize norms, they must originate from cultural values.

Beliefs: According to Schein, beliefs direct the behaviors of members of an organization by telling them how they should think and feel. The more beliefs are similar and shared by people, the more they become settled and distinct in the culture. Reaching the goals will be easier when beliefs are internalized in an organization.

Norms: Norms are invisible elements. If organizations want to improve the performance and increase the profitability of their employees, the first element they need to focus on is norms.

Heroes: Heroes are important people who make organization culture or adopt organization culture. At the same time, the heroes are symbolic of the organization culture. In many organizations, heroes are role models.

Stories and tales: In relation to the organization, they are important events that members live or listen.

Language: One of the key elements of communication is the language and, at the same time, cultivation.

Symbols: Symbols are symbols and words in organizational culture. These include special meanings. Essential values forming the basis of the organization are expressed by symbols.

2.3.2. Type of school culture

School culture is one of the most complex and important concepts in education. In relation to school improvement, it has also been one of the most neglected (Stoll, 2000). Schools have different culture, as cultures of organizations including school are once started by some leaders and goes on by building one after another by different school leaders. According to scholars in the education sector, there are different types of school cultures. Eventhough there are many types of school cultures, the five types of school cultures introduced by Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) are discussed as below.

Collaborative: Teachers share strong educational values, work together to pursue professional development opportunities, and are committed to improving their work. They are very interested in best practices for teaching and learning.

Comfortable-Collaborative: Schools are polite places where most of us learn to get along and fit in with others. Teachers are generally aware of what their colleagues are doing. Deep reflection is not the norm and can result in a “fixed mindset.” This is a very common type of culture.

Contrived-Collegial: Leadership determines how staff is to behave. Meant to support new approaches and techniques in teaching, but it can feel superficial and may reduce teachers’ motivation to embrace change.

Balkanized: Collaboration occurs only within cliques of like-minded staff. Teachers who feel the need to compete for position, resources, and territory may recruit others to join the clique. If a conflict exists between the administrator and the prevailing clique, the latter will often win out.

Fragmented: People pretty much do their own thing. Meetings may feel like meaningless rituals, with teachers watching the clock. There is a lack of professional interaction among teachers, especially regarding best practices or student achievement.

Deal and Kennedy (1999) also added Toxic type of school culture. They described Toxic type as something that is not uncommon for teachers to focus on the negative aspects of the school’s operations and personnel may use flaws as justifications for poor performance. Their purpose may be to protect their beliefs and might not align with the goal of fostering student achievement.

2.4. Role of School Leaders in creating and shaping school culture

The school leader is responsible for setting up an affirmative school culture in his organization by creating a common vision which calls for an accepted participation in administration and having impressive communication with his/her staff members (Koker & Yeniceri, 2013). Konold, et al, 2018; Ngozi, 2022) added that the school principal, as the driver of the institution, teachers and other staff members have an important role to play in helping to students to excel in their academic journey. They both should create a very conducive school climate that assists students in the school to achieve high academic results. School leaders have a very important role in determining the direction, creating and maintaining a positive school culture (Leithwood and Sun; Syahrul et al 2024). Leaders have a wealth of tips for lightening the school atmosphere, for example simple ways of starting a conversation or opening the door in the broadest sense (Hollingworth & Olsen; Syahrul et al 2024). In this context, the role of leaders in building a positive culture among subordinates will be clearly visible (Morris, Lummis, Lock, Ferguson, Hill, and Nykiel, 2020; Syahrul et al 2024). Whitaker, Whitaker & Lumpa (2008) cited in Ngozi (2022) explained that in a school, organizational culture plays a crucial role as there are two levels; the first being the management culture where plans are crafted, resolution taken and task of the school distributed. The second one is the classroom culture.

2.5. Relationship between school culture and leadership styles

Schools that do well in their academic performance are always associated with good leadership styles and good student behavior (Ngozi, 2022). Principals are responsible for creating successful teaching and learning environments for staff and students. In doing so, they need to ensure that the culture of the school is positive. Leaders who succeed in developing a positive school culture encourage collaboration between teachers, in order to ensure that best practices are shared and that teachers are working toward a common goal. In addition to collaboration, leaders need to create a supportive environment that provides feedback and promotes open communication in order to develop staff members. Principals who ensure that their staff members have the necessary classroom resources create a strong level of trust in the leadership of the school (Dinsdale, 2017).

A leadership style is a leader's style of imparting way, implementing plans, and encouraging people (Apura, 2012; Mediatrix, 2023). Many leadership styles have been identified in

educational leadership and management literature. The main ones are the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Other the leadership styles employed by headmasters may include the bureaucratic leadership style, charismatic leadership, pseudo-democratic leadership style, nomothetic leadership style, ideographic leadership style, transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style and the benevolent-autocratic leadership style (Aruzie et al, 2018). Culture influences everything that goes on in schools: how staff dress, what they talk about, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction, and the emphasis given student and faculty learning (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Deal & Peterson (2009) stated that school stakeholders have always sensed something special, yet undefined about their school-something extremely powerful but difficult to describe (Deal & Peterson, 2009). A culture will be strong or weak depending on the interactions between people in the organization. There are many overlapping and cohesive interactions in a strong culture, so that knowledge about the organization's distinctive character and what it takes to thrive in it is widely spread (Shafer, 2018).

An organization's structure and operating methods may dictate the type of leadership style that managers must adopt (Aruzie et al, 2018). Common to all schools is the presence of a principal who works through a group or groups to achieve organizational goals. To arrive at these goals, the school head adopts one leadership style or another. Whatever leadership style is adopted will determine the sort of cooperation and relationship that will exist between the principal and his/her subordinates (Mediatix, 2023). The leadership style of school principals and the culture are two important factors that impact a school. School performance reflects the effectiveness and efficiency of the schooling process. Leadership is the ability to influence others to pursue common goals. Evidence suggests that leadership is present in all cultures. However, what does appear to differ from school to school is the type of leadership that is most effective. Again, these differences can be partially explained by differences in assumptions and values across cultures (Yuki, 2006; Eshete, 2021).

To create a school culture, school leaders should first read the culture its history and current condition. School leader should know the deeper meanings embedded in the school before trying to reshape it. Second, leaders uncover and articulate core values, looking for those that reinforce what is best for students and that support student-centered learning. It is important to identify which aspects of the culture are negative and which are positive. Finally, leaders work to fashion

a positive context, reinforcing cultural elements that are positive and modifying those that are negative and dysfunctional. Positive school cultures are never monolithic or overly conforming, but core values and shared purpose should be pervasive and deep. Some of the specific ways school leaders shape cultures follow. School leader's knowledge on the link between school culture and leadership style would help them identify what type of leadership style lead to positive school culture. Therefore, exploring the existing relationship between school culture and the leadership style of principals would help accelerate the efforts of improving quality educational provision.

2.6. Ways of Managing School culture

Within the unique ecosystem of an international school fostering a positive and inclusive culture is paramount for student success and staff satisfaction

However, when toxicity infiltrates the school environment, it can hinder learning outcomes and diminish morale

o combat the challenges associated with a toxic culture in international schools, several key strategies can be employed to foster a more positive and inclusive environment. First, leadership alignment and modelling are essential, as cultural transformation must begin at the top. School administrators and senior staff should exemplify the values and behaviours they aim to instil within the community. When leaders demonstrate integrity, transparency, and accountability, they set a strong foundation for a supportive and ethical culture (Schein, 2017; GSE, 2018).

Second, establishing transparent communication channels is critical for promoting openness and trust. Schools should create systems that encourage dialogue among staff, students, and parents, allowing for the constructive sharing of feedback, suggestions, and concerns. Transparency not only strengthens trust but also empowers all stakeholders to participate actively in the school's continuous improvement efforts (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Third, it is important to reinforce core values that counter toxic cultural tendencies. Schools should clearly define and uphold values aligned with their mission and vision particularly those promoting diversity, inclusivity, respect, and academic excellence. Embedding these values in daily practices, curriculum design, and interpersonal interactions helps build a cohesive, values-driven culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016; GSE, 2018).

Fourth, student and staff engagement should be a priority. Both groups should be actively involved in initiatives that revitalize school culture. Providing opportunities for student leadership, peer mentoring, and extracurricular collaboration fosters teamwork and belonging. Similarly, ongoing professional development for teachers and staff enhances competence, morale, and commitment (Day & Sammons, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020).

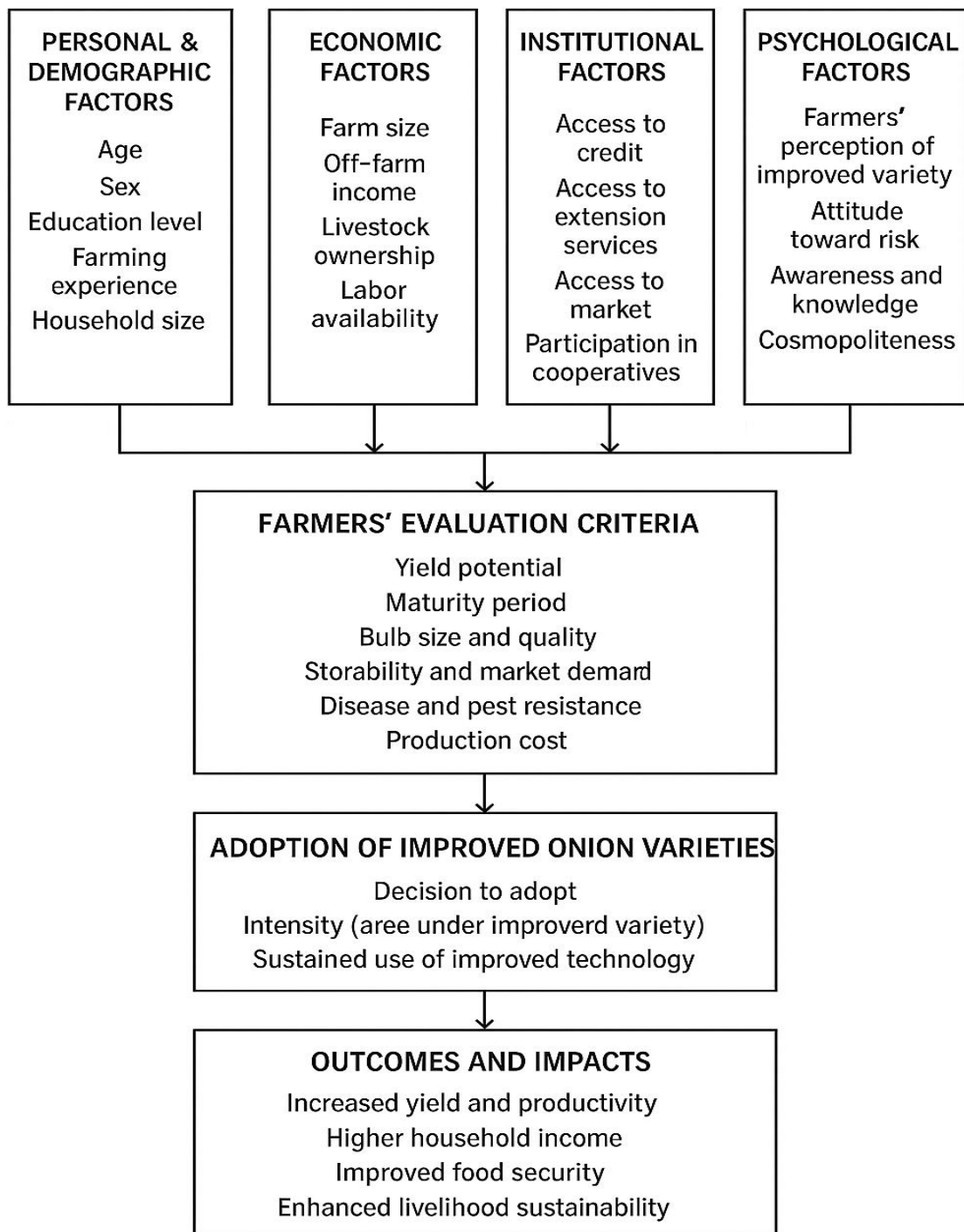
Fifth, schools must address toxic behaviors proactively. This involves implementing clear policies and procedures to manage issues such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Training programs on conflict resolution, empathy, and cultural sensitivity can equip staff with the tools to identify and mitigate toxic behaviors before they escalate (Cohen et al., 2009; Evans, 2020).

Ultimately, revitalizing the culture of an international school requires collective effort and sustained commitment to inclusivity and well-being. By aligning leadership, promoting open communication, reinforcing positive core values, engaging all members of the community, and addressing harmful behaviours proactively, schools can create nurturing environments conducive to both learning and personal growth. Though cultural transformation may be a gradual process, its outcomes improved relationships, enhanced morale, and academic excellence are invaluable to the long-term success of students and staff alike (Fullan, 2014; GSE, 2018).

2.7. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Conceptual framework can be presented through different styles. The most common styles used by researchers are such as writing a series of descriptive as an essay, writing charts, mind-mapping, or diagrams showing connections and relationships between independent and dependent variables, writing model link between the independent variable and the dependent variable and writing both charts, mind maps, or diagrams and essay. Hence, the researcher opted presenting using writing a series of descriptive as an essay and figure as follows.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework diagram



Sources: Researcher developed from literature

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to investigate the relationship between school culture and principals' leadership styles in public secondary schools within Gode City Administration. It describes the research design, study area, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations observed during the study. The chapter also explains the procedures used to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The methodological framework was designed to ensure that the data collected were accurate, relevant, and sufficient to address the research questions and achieve the stated objectives of the study.

3.1. Description of the Study Area

Gode City is one of the largest urban centres in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia. It is located approximately 1,000 kilometres east of Addis Ababa. According to the 1997 national census, the city had a total population of 857,755, comprising 428,019 males and 429,736 females. Based on 2010 data from the Central Statistical Agency (CSA), Gode's population was estimated at 950,782, with 488,235 males and 442,089 females. Gode serves as the administrative centre of Gode Woreda and is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somalis (99%), while other ethnic groups account for about 1% of the population.

According to the 1997 national census, 110,044 residents were enrolled in school—57,766 males and 52,278 females. However, approximately 35,478 individuals, representing 77.5% of the total population, were illiterate, including 17,273 males and 18,205 females. The city experiences a hot arid climate (Köppen BWh), characterized by consistently high temperatures and low, erratic rainfall. The mean annual temperature is about 28.8°C (83.8°F), with afternoon temperatures frequently exceeding 32°C (89.6°F) and mornings rarely falling below 20°C (68°F). Gode has two short rainy seasons, occurring between April–May and October–November, which together contribute about 291 mm (11.46 inches) of precipitation, representing roughly 90% of the annual average of 325 mm (12.8 inches). These rains are caused by the passage of the Intertropical Convergence Zone and are highly unpredictable. Between 1967 and 1999, the wettest year was

1967 with 754.2 mm (29.69 inches) of rainfall, while the driest was 1980 with only 38.8 mm (1.53 inches).

3.2. Research Design

A research design provides a structured plan and strategy for investigating a research problem. It specifies the procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to answer the research questions (Kumar, 2011).

This study adopts a descriptive survey design **to** explore the relationship between school culture and principals' leadership styles. The descriptive survey design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather data at a specific point in time and describe existing conditions as they are (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It also allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions within a single data collection phase (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, the design facilitates the assessment of perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of individuals or groups efficiently and economically.

3.3. Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy in examining the relationship between school culture and principals' leadership styles.

3.3.1. Primary Data Sources

Primary data were obtained directly from students, teachers, and principals, as they are the key stakeholders who shape and experience the school's culture.

3.3.2. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data were collected from unpublished documents such as annual reports, meeting minutes, school improvement plans, and other institutional records relevant to the study.

3.4. Population, Sampling, and Sampling Procedures

3.4.1. Population of the Study

Based on the Gode City Administration Education Office (2024/2025), there are seven secondary schools in the city administration, and four of them are privately owned, while the remaining three are government-owned. This study concentrated only on public secondary schools for two main reasons: (1) private schools are governed by different structures and systems that might

interfere with the relationship between leadership styles and school culture, and (2) most secondary school-going students in the city administration attend public schools.

The target population included all teachers, principals, and supervisors in the three public secondary schools. As shown in Table 3.1, the total population included 90 teachers, 6 principals (one principal and one vice principal in each school, although some schools had two vice principals), and 3 supervisors (one in each school). Therefore, the total accessible population was 117.

3.4.2. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For the teacher sample, the study adopted a census sampling method because the number of teachers was small enough to be manageable. Census sampling is a type of sampling where all members of the population are included in the study. This helps in eliminating the sampling error and achieving maximum representativeness if the population is not too large (Kumar, 2011). Since the total number of teachers in the population was 90, it was decided that all of them could be included in the study for the most comprehensive results.

However, during the data collection process, it was found that 18 teachers were not available for the study for various reasons: study leave (5 teachers), annual leave (4 teachers), illness (3 teachers), and regional examination grading (6 teachers). As a result, the actual teacher sample included 90 teachers, which accounted for 83.3% of the target population, exceeding the minimum response rate of 75% recommended for survey studies (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012).

For principals/supervisors, purposive sampling was used. All 6 principals (including vice principals) and all 3 supervisors were chosen to participate in the study because they have unique knowledge and play a crucial role in understanding school leadership and culture. Purposive sampling is useful when the researcher chooses participants who have in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Table 3.1: Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Justification
Secondary Schools	3	3	Purposive	Only public secondary schools in Gode City Administration
Teachers	90	90	Census	Manageable population size; maximizes representativeness
Principals	6	6	Purposive	Key informants with unique leadership perspectives
Supervisors	3	3	Purposive	External observers of school leadership and culture
Total	102	102		

Census sampling for teachers was necessary for three reasons. First, the teacher population of 90 was small enough to include all members without incurring undue cost or time considerations. Second, sampling all teachers reduced sampling error and improved the precision of descriptive statistics. Third, a census method ensured that a variety of views from different departments, levels of experience, and demographic characteristics were captured.

Purposive sampling for principals was necessary because school principals have distinct roles of authority and have complete knowledge of their actual leadership practices and the cultural context of the school. Their views are unique and cannot be captured from other participants (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Purposive sampling for supervisors was necessary because supervisors have the opportunity to view several schools and provide comparative information regarding leadership practices and cultural context of the schools. Their perspective provides a valuable point of triangulation for teacher and principal data.

Notwithstanding the best efforts to ensure representativeness, there are a few limitations in the sampling design that need to be mentioned. Firstly, the fact that private schools have been excluded means that the results may not be generalizable to the entire range of secondary

education in Gode City Administration. Secondly, the fact that 18 teachers were not available for data collection could result in non-response bias if these teachers systematically differ from those who were available. Thirdly, the fact that only three schools were selected means that multi-level statistical analysis cannot be used to separate individual and school-level effects

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

In this study, two main instruments of data collection were used: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The choice of the instruments was informed by the research questions, the type of data needed, and the characteristics of the two groups of respondents. The use of multiple instruments helped to triangulate the data, which improved the validity and reliability of the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed to enable the collection of quantitative data from teachers on their perceptions of school culture and the leadership styles of principals. The teachers were chosen as the main respondents because they are directly involved in the day-to-day running of the schools and have direct contact with the principals and are therefore in a position to experience the school culture (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998; Schein, 2017).

The questionnaire was conducted among 90 teachers from three public secondary schools in Gode City Administration, representing 83.3% of the total teacher population (90). The schools were: School A (32 teachers), School B (29 teachers), and School C (29 teachers). Eighteen teachers could not participate in the data collection process due to study leave, annual leave, illness, or involvement in regional examination grading. The questionnaire was conducted once in the normal school schedule over a two-week period (March 10-24, 2025). The teachers were required to fill the questionnaires in their respective schools, taking an average of 25-30 minutes. All 90 questionnaires distributed were completed and returned, giving a 100% response rate among the participating teachers.

The tool had three sections. Section A gathered demographic data (age, gender, educational qualification, and teaching experience) through a multiple-choice method. Section B included the School Culture Survey (29 items) developed from Gruenert and Valentine (1998), which assessed five factors: teacher collaboration (11 items), unity of purpose (5 items), professional

development (5 items), collegial support (4 items), and learning partnership (4 items). Section C included the Leadership Styles Scale (14 items) developed from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1997), which assessed transformational leadership (7 items), transactional leadership (4 items), and laissez-faire leadership (3 items). All items in Sections B and C employed a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire was designed in English, since English language proficiency is common among secondary school teachers in Ethiopia, and English is the language of instruction. To facilitate understanding, the researcher explained each question to the principals prior to administering the questionnaire, and the researcher was present when teachers responded to the questionnaire to answer questions. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire using a systematic approach: prior notification to the principals, introduction during staff meetings, distribution with introductory letters, and follow-up visits for teachers who required extra time. Completed questionnaires were sealed in envelopes by the respondents to maintain confidentiality. No personal information was collected, and the questionnaires were stored in a locked cabinet that was accessible only to the researcher.

3.5.2. Interview Guide

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth qualitative information from principals and supervisors. These key informants have a special understanding of school leadership practices and culture that cannot be obtained using questionnaires alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were used to allow flexibility to follow up on emerging topics while also ensuring that key areas of interest are covered systematically across interviews.

A total of 9 key informants were interviewed: 6 principals (one principal and one vice principal from each of the three schools) and 3 supervisors (one supervisor for each school). Each interview lasted between 35 and 60 minutes, with an average length of 45 minutes. Interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants to cause minimal disruption to their administrative duties. Interviews took place in the participants' offices during breaks or after school hours, except for two that took place in separate quiet locations chosen by the

participants. Data gathering using interviews took three weeks (March 10-28, 2025), concurrently with questionnaire administration.

With the prior permission of each participant, all interviews were conducted using a digital voice recorder, which was visible throughout the interview process. Two participants were initially hesitant about being recorded, but later agreed after being assured about the confidentiality of the research. Immediately after each interview, the researcher listened to the recording for clarity and jotted down initial thoughts on the themes that emerged. The recordings were then transferred to a password-protected computer within 24 hours and coded (P1-P6 for principals and S1-S3 for supervisors). A consent form was signed by all 9 participants, giving permission to audio-record them for research purposes only, with the assurance that the recording would be kept confidential and would be deleted after the approval of the thesis.

Separate but related interview guides were developed for principals and supervisors. The guide for principals delved into leadership philosophy and style, description of present school culture, relationship between leadership practices and school culture, difficulties in leading a diverse staff, and approaches to building a positive culture. The guide for supervisors addressed observations of principals' leadership styles across multiple schools, comparison of school cultures, principal-teacher relationships, system-wide challenges, and suggestions for enhancing leadership preparation and support. Both guides contained open-ended questions with probes to promote responses.

Examples of sample questions for principals are: "How would you describe your leadership style? Can you give me some examples of how you lead your teachers?" "What does 'school culture' mean to you in the context of your school? How would you describe the current culture here?" "In what ways do you think your leadership practices impact teacher collaboration and interaction?" Examples of sample questions for supervisors are: "Based on your observations, how would you describe the leadership styles of principals in the schools you supervise?" "What differences have you observed in school culture in these schools? What accounts for these differences?" "How do the leadership behaviors of principals appear to impact teacher collaboration, motivation, and professional development?"

The interviews were conducted in English, the language of choice among the participants, to make them comfortable and facilitate free and detailed responses. The researcher, who is fluent in English personally conducted all the interviews. The key questions were translated from English to English and back-translated by an expert in English to check for conceptual equivalence. In the course of the interviews, the questions were posed in English with the freedom to rephrase if the participants appeared uncertain. The participants were encouraged to respond to the questions in English using their own words and expressions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in English within 48 hours by the researcher. The relevant parts of the transcripts were translated into English for analysis and reporting. The translation aimed at capturing the meaning rather than the literal translation. A sample of the translations (20%) was checked by an independent bilingual researcher to ensure accuracy. The total length of the transcripts was 72 pages of single-spaced text.

The researcher kept a field notebook to record observations about the interview environment, non-verbal communication, initial impressions, and methodological observations. The field notebook added to the analysis of the data by providing information about the context in which the verbal data was collected.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interview, and they were reminded of their rights to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was ensured by using codes instead of names. Two participants asked for and received copies of their transcripts. The recordings and transcripts will be destroyed after the approval of the thesis and any publications that may result.

3.6. Data Gathering Procedures

This section explains the processes used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The processes were chosen depending on the research questions and the type of data obtained.

3.6.1. Quantitative data analyses

Quantitative data obtained from teacher questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Before data analysis, it was ensured that all 90 questionnaires were complete, and none of the questionnaires were eliminated since all questions were answered completely. The accuracy of

data entry was confirmed by randomly checking 10% of the entries against the original questionnaires, with an error rate of less than 1%.

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies and percentages were determined for demographic variables (gender, educational level, and teaching experience) to describe the characteristics of the respondents. For dimensions of school culture and leadership styles, means and standard deviations were calculated to identify the central tendency and dispersion of responses. Mean scores were interpreted using the following scale: 1.00-1.80 (Very Low), 1.81-2.60 (Low), 2.61-3.40 (Moderate), 3.41-4.20 (High), and 4.21-5.00 (Very High). These statistics answered the first research question about the prevalent leadership styles being used by principals.

Inferential Statistics: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationship between leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) and the five dimensions of school culture (teacher collaboration, unity of purpose, professional development, collegial support, learning partnership). The strength of correlation was evaluated using Cohen's criteria (1988): 0.10-0.29 (weak), 0.30-0.49 (moderate), and 0.50-1.00 (strong). The level of significance was set at 0.05 and 0.01 (two-tailed) for the analysis. Before analysis, the assumptions of normality (skewness and kurtosis between -2 and +2) and linearity (evaluation

3.6.2. Qualitative data analyses

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with principals (n=6) and supervisors (n=3) was analyzed using thematic analysis as per Braun and Clarke (2021). All the interviews were transcribed verbatim in Af-Somali within 48 hours by the researcher. The transcripts were checked several times while listening to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. The relevant parts selected for reporting were translated into English, and 20% of the translations were checked by an independent bilingual researcher.

Manual coding was done to identify meaningful parts of the data in relation to the research questions. Both inductive codes (codes that emerge from the data) and deductive codes (codes that come from the conceptual framework) were employed. The codes were organized into possible themes, which were checked and refined by iterative comparisons with the coded data

and the full transcripts. The themes were then matched with the conceptual framework of the study: manifestations of leadership style, dimensions of school culture, and contextual factors.

The study ensured trustworthiness of the findings by using triangulation among different groups of participants, peer debriefing, member checking with three participants, and keeping an audit trail of the analysis.

3.6.3. Integration of quantitative and qualitative data

Integration was done at the interpretation level using the concurrent triangulation design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For each research question, the quantitative findings (means, correlations) were considered together with the themes and quotes to determine convergence, divergence, and complementarity. This helped in gaining a complete understanding of the relationship between school culture and leadership styles.

3.7. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Before the actual data collection, the reliability of the instruments was determined using a pilot study with 20 teachers and principals from a secondary school that was not part of the actual study. Reliability is the consistency of the measurements, which determines how well the results can be replicated and are free from random error (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the internal consistency, which should be 0.70 or higher to be acceptable for research (Field, 2018).

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients for All Study Variables

Instrument	Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
School Culture Survey	Teacher Collaboration	11	0.843
	Unity of Purpose	5	0.791
	Professional Development	5	0.699
	Collegial Support	4	0.842
	Learning Partnership	4	0.752
	Overall School Culture	29	0.935
Leadership Style	Transformational	7	0.852

Instrument	Leadership		
	Transactional Leadership	4	0.840
	Laissez-faire Leadership	3	0.867
	Overall Leadership Styles	14	0.935

As illustrated in Table 2, the results of the reliability test showed good internal consistency for all dimensions of both surveys. For the School Culture Survey, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.699 (Professional Development) to 0.843 (Teacher Collaboration). Although the Professional Development dimension had a slightly lower coefficient than the recommended 0.70, it is still acceptable for educational research (George & Mallery, 2019). The Unity of Purpose dimension ($\alpha = 0.791$), Collegial Support ($\alpha = 0.842$), and Learning Partnership ($\alpha = 0.752$) had good to excellent internal consistency. The overall internal consistency of the School Culture Survey had a coefficient of 0.935, which is excellent for all 29 items.

For the Leadership Style Instrument, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were 0.840 for Transactional Leadership, 0.867 for Laissez-faire Leadership, and 0.852 for Transformational Leadership. These coefficients are well above the recommended 0.70, ensuring high internal consistency for each of the leadership styles. The overall reliability coefficient for the Leadership Style Instrument was 0.935, which is a high consistency level for all 14 items.

The reliability coefficients are much better than those reported in the original studies validating the instruments. Gruenert and Valentine (1998) reported coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.91 for the School Culture Survey, while Bass and Avolio (1997) reported coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.94 for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The findings indicate that both instruments were reliable for measuring school culture and leadership styles in the context of Gode City Administration secondary schools.

3.8. Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically and triangulated with quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between school culture and leadership styles.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. The researcher adhered to institutional and professional guidelines governing research involving human participants (Yin, 2014). After obtaining approval from Haramaya University, the researcher secured permission from the Gode City Administration Education Office and from the selected schools. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed of the study's objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and the minimal risks involved. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at all stages, ensuring participants' privacy and trust.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study based on data collected from teachers, principals, and supervisors in selected secondary schools of Gode City Administration. The chapter begins with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. It then presents findings related to the major variables of the study school culture and leadership styles— and examines the relationships between them. The discussion section interprets these findings in light of the reviewed literature and theoretical framework, highlighting consistencies and differences with previous studies. Overall, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how school culture and principals' leadership styles interact and influence each other within the study context.

4.1. Characteristics of respondents

Table 2: Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	77	77.8
	Female	22	22.2
Education level	Certificate	5	5.1
	Diploma	59	59.6
	First degree	34	34.3
	Second degree	1	1.0
Experience	1-5 years	35	35.4
	6-10 years	7	7.1
	11-15 years	42	42.4
	Above 16 years	15	15.2
Totals		99	100

Source: own survey result

Table 4 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The data show that the majority of the respondents were male, accounting for 77 individuals (77.8%), while female respondents made up 22 (22.2%) of the total sample. This distribution suggests that male teachers are predominant in secondary schools within the Gode

Zone, indicating a gender imbalance in the teaching workforce. Regarding educational qualifications, 5 respondents (5.1%) held teaching certificates, 59 (59.6%) possessed diplomas, and 34 (34.3%) were first-degree holders, while only 1 respondent (1.0%) had attained a second-degree qualification. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2010), the minimum qualification required to teach at the secondary school level is a first degree. However, the data reveal that a considerable number of teachers in the Gode Zone are under qualified, suggesting that the MOE's qualification standards have not been fully met.

In terms of principals' training and professional development, interview responses revealed that most principals were adequately trained as teachers but lacked formal training in school leadership and management. In the Gode Zone, principals are often appointed without specialized preparation for leadership roles. Only one out of eight principals reported having received formal training in educational leadership, holding a master's degree in that field, while the remaining principals possessed first degrees in various subject areas. Furthermore, most principals had not participated in induction or management training upon their promotion or during their tenure as school leaders. This finding indicates a gap in leadership preparation and professional development among principals, which may have implications for the overall effectiveness of school administration in the region.

4.2. School culture

Table 1: Teacher collaboration

Teacher collaboration	Mean	Std. D.
Leaders value teachers' ideas.	3.61	.831

Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	4.00	1.010
Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.	4.16	1.017
Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	4.56	.823
Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	4.19	.955
Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	3.72	1.286
My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.	4.07	.848
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	4.22	1.016
Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	3.56	1.145
Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	4.70	.788
Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	4.74	.764
Mean	4.13	0.953

Source: own survey

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the Teacher Collaboration dimension of the School Culture Survey developed by Gruenert and Valentine (1998). This factor measured the degree to which teachers engage in constructive dialogue and collaborative practices that support the school's vision. The overall mean score for teacher collaboration was 4.13, with a standard deviation of 0.953, indicating that teachers generally agreed that collaboration was present in their schools. Although the standard deviation was relatively high, suggesting some variation in responses, the overall agreement level remained positive.

Among the individual items, the highest mean scores were recorded for "Teachers are encouraged to share ideas" ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.764$) and "Administrators protect instruction and planning time" ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.788$), indicating strong agreement that the school leadership promotes idea sharing and safeguards instructional time. Similarly, items such as "Teachers are involved in the decision-making process" ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.823$) and "Leaders facilitate teachers working together" ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.955$) also reflected positive perceptions of collaboration.

Conversely, the items with lower mean scores, such as “Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching” ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.145$) and “Leaders value teachers’ ideas” ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.831$), suggest that while collaboration is generally strong, there may be areas for improvement in fostering innovation and valuing teacher input. Overall, the findings indicate that teachers perceive a moderately high level of collaboration within their schools, reflecting a generally positive and supportive school culture that encourages teamwork and professional dialogue among staff.

Table 2: Unity of purpose

Unity of purpose	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers support the mission of the school.	3.47	.812
The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	4.72	.858
Teachers understand the mission of the school.	4.10	.802
The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	4.08	1.017
Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	4.06	.831
Mean	4.08	0.864

Sources: own survey result 2025

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for the Unity of Purpose dimension of the School Culture Survey. This factor assesses the extent to which teachers share a common understanding of and commitment to the school’s mission and goals. The overall mean score for this dimension was 4.08, with a standard deviation of 0.864, indicating that respondents generally agreed that a clear sense of purpose and shared mission exists within their schools. The relatively low standard deviation suggests moderate consistency among teachers’ responses, reflecting a common understanding of the school’s direction.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was observed for “The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers” ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.858$), showing strong agreement that the school’s mission effectively guides instructional and organizational practices. Similarly, “Teachers understand the mission of the school” ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.802$) and “The school mission statement reflects the values of the community” ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.017$) both received high ratings, suggesting that the school’s mission aligns well with both teacher understanding and community values.

However, the item “Teachers support the mission of the school” ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.812$) received the lowest mean score within this factor, indicating that while teachers recognize and understand the mission, their level of active support or alignment with it may be somewhat lower. Overall, the findings imply that schools in the study demonstrate a generally strong sense of unity of purpose, though greater efforts may be needed to ensure that all teachers consistently embrace and actively support the school’s mission in their professional practice.

Table 3: Professional development

Professional development	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	3.61	1.284
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	4.20	.979
Professional development is valued by the faculty.	4.21	.576
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	4.82	.612
The faculty values school improvement	4.24	.591
Mean	4.21	0.808

Sources: own survey 2025

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for the Professional Development dimension of the School Culture Survey. This factor evaluates the extent to which teachers engage in continuous learning, seek professional growth opportunities, and value school-wide improvement. The overall mean score for this dimension was 4.21, with a standard deviation of 0.808, indicating that teachers generally agreed that professional development is both valued and practiced within their schools. The relatively moderate standard deviation suggests some variation in responses, though overall perceptions remain positive.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was recorded for “Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process” ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.612$), suggesting that teachers actively update their understanding of effective teaching and learning strategies. Similarly, “The faculty values school improvement” ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.591$) and “Professional development is valued by the faculty” ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.576$) both received high ratings, indicating a shared appreciation among teachers for ongoing professional growth and institutional development.

In contrast, “Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction” ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.284$) received the lowest mean score, reflecting that while teachers recognize the importance of professional development, their engagement with broader professional networks may be limited. Likewise, “Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences” ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.979$) suggests a generally positive but somewhat varied level of participation in external learning opportunities. Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers perceive professional development as a valued and integral part of their school culture, though increased emphasis on collaboration and networking beyond the school could further enhance professional growth.

Table 4: Collegial support

Collegial support	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers trust each other	3.84	.966
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	3.69	1.113
Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	3.96	.868
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	3.95	1.034
Mean	3.86	0.995

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for the Collegial Support dimension of the School Culture Survey. This factor measures the degree to which teachers trust, respect, and support one another in their professional roles. The overall mean score for this dimension was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 0.995, indicating that teachers generally agreed that collegial support exists within their schools, though the relatively higher standard deviation suggests some variation in perceptions among respondents.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was observed for “Teachers’ ideas are valued by other teachers” ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.868$) and “Teachers work cooperatively in groups” ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.034$), showing that teachers perceive a positive level of mutual respect and collaboration in their work environment. Similarly, the item “Teachers trust each other” ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.966$) indicates a fairly strong sense of trust among colleagues, which is a key component of a supportive school culture.

However, “Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem” ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.113$) received the lowest mean score, suggesting that while cooperation and mutual respect are evident, there may be instances where teachers are less responsive to assisting colleagues in need. Overall, the findings suggest a moderately strong level of collegial support within schools, with room for improvement in strengthening trust and mutual assistance among teachers to further enhance collaboration and professional solidarity.

At last, on the item for learning partnership had the lowest mean score of 3.74 and the highest standard deviation of 0.94. However, it indicated that the teachers not agreed to some extent that the teachers and students as well as parents had no effective partnership in their schools. Although this factor had the highest standard deviation, it still indicated that there was not a great deal of variation in the responses for this factor.

Table 5: Learning partnership

Learning partnership	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	3.78	.864
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	4.47	.747
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance	3.20	1.050
Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.	3.54	1.109
Mean	3.74	0.942

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics for the Learning Partnership dimension of the School Culture Survey. This factor assesses the extent to which teachers, parents, and students collaborate and share responsibility for student learning and academic success. The overall mean score for this dimension was 3.74, with a standard deviation of 0.942, indicating that respondents generally agreed that a moderate level of learning partnership exists within their schools. The relatively high standard deviation suggests some variation in teachers' perceptions regarding the strength of these partnerships.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was found for "Parents trust teachers' professional judgments" ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.747$), indicating strong confidence and respect from

parents toward teachers' expertise and decisions. In contrast, the lowest mean score was observed for "Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance" ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.050$), suggesting that while trust exists; regular and effective communication between teachers and parents may be limited.

The items "Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance" ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.864$) and "Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling" ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.109$) received moderate ratings, reflecting a fair degree of shared expectations and student accountability. Overall, these findings imply that while trust between teachers and parents is strong, communication and shared engagement among teachers, parents, and students could be further strengthened to foster a more cohesive and effective learning partnership.

4.3. Leadership styles

Descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations, for each of the individual items are presented below.

Table 6: Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	3.89	1.413
Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	4.73	.767
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	3.85	.719
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	3.29	1.473
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	2.92	1.066
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	4.13	1.113
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	4.11	1.009

Mean	3.84	1.08
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Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics for the Transformational Leadership dimension of the leadership style survey. This dimension reflects the extent to which school leaders inspire, motivate, and support teachers toward achieving a shared vision and continuous improvement. The overall mean score for transformational leadership was 3.84, with a standard deviation of 1.08, indicating that respondents generally agreed that transformational leadership behaviors are practiced in their schools, though the relatively high standard deviation suggests some variation in perceptions among teachers.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was obtained for “Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together” ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.767$), suggesting that transformational leaders play a strong role in promoting collaboration and teamwork among staff. Similarly, high mean scores were recorded for “Parents trust teachers’ professional judgments” ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.113$) and “Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques” ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.009$), indicating that school leaders encourage innovation and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders.

Conversely, the lowest mean score was reported for “Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences” ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.066$), implying that opportunities for or engagement in external professional learning may be limited. Likewise, “Teachers work cooperatively in groups” ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.473$) also showed a relatively low mean, suggesting that while leadership supports collaboration, consistent teamwork among teachers may still need improvement. Overall, the results suggest that transformational leadership is moderately strong within the schools, particularly in fostering collaboration and innovation, but could be enhanced by promoting more consistent professional engagement and teamwork among teachers.

Table 7: Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.	3.77	.913
My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously	4.22	.995
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	3.98	.857
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	3.94	.867
Mean	3.97	0.908

Table 11 presents the descriptive statistics for the Transactional Leadership dimension of the leadership style survey. This dimension evaluates the extent to which school leaders focus on structured processes, reward performance, and ensure adherence to established policies and expectations. The overall mean score for transactional leadership was 3.97, with a standard deviation of 0.908, indicating that respondents generally agreed that transactional leadership behaviors are present in their schools, with moderate consistency across responses.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was recorded for “My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously” ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.995$), suggesting that teachers perceive that their input is recognized and valued in school decision-making processes. Similarly, “Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process” ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.857$) and “Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance” ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.867$) indicate that transactional leadership supports professional accountability and alignment of expectations among stakeholders.

The item “Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well” ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.913$) received the lowest mean score, suggesting that recognition of teacher performance, while present, may not be consistently applied. Overall, the findings indicate that transactional

leadership practices are moderately strong, fostering structure, accountability, and participation in policy-making, though there may be opportunities to enhance acknowledgment and reinforcement of teacher achievements.

Table 8: Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leadership	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.	3.21	.972
Teachers have freedom to do as they think best in the interest of promoting progress in this school.	3.49	.983
Teachers are not interfered with when making decisions that promote progress in this school.	3.47	1.043
Mean	3.39	0.999

Table 12 presents the descriptive statistics for the Laissez-Faire Leadership dimension of the leadership style survey. This dimension reflects the extent to which school leaders adopt a hands-off approach, allowing teachers autonomy in decision-making and classroom practices. The overall mean score for laissez-faire leadership was 3.39, with a standard deviation of 0.999, indicating that respondents generally perceived a moderate level of autonomy in their schools, with relatively varied responses among teachers.

Among the individual items, the highest mean score was observed for “Teachers have freedom to do as they think best in the interest of promoting progress in this school” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.983$), suggesting that teachers generally experience some autonomy in their professional practice. The items “Teachers are not interfered with when making decisions that promote progress in this school” ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.043$) and “Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed” ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.972$) indicate that while teachers have opportunities for independent decision-making and open discussion, these practices are not strongly emphasized.

Overall, the findings suggest that laissez-faire leadership is present to a moderate degree, providing teachers with some autonomy and space for professional discretion. However, the relatively moderate mean and high standard deviation indicate variability in how consistently this leadership style is experienced across the schools.

4.4. Relationships of school culture and leadership styles

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to find the relationships between the factors of transformational leadership and the factors of school culture. Table 6 presents the correlation matrix for each of these factors. The data can be interpreted as the following: 0 to .39 = weak correlation; .40 to .59 = moderate correlation; and .60 or higher = strong correlation. In addition, statistical significance is reported at the .01 and .05 levels.

4.4.1. Relationships of school culture and Transformational Leadership

Table 9: Correlation Matrix for Transformational Leadership and Dimensions of School Culture (N = 99)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Transformational Leadership	1					
2. Teacher Collaboration	.483**	1				
3. Unity of Purpose	-.167	-.108	1			
4. Professional Development	.858**	.470**	-.054	1		
5. Collegial Support	.301**	.114	-.148	.170	1	
6. Learning Partnership	.682**	.391**	-.168	.702**	.030	1

Note.

$p < .01$ (2-tailed).

All correlations are based on $N = 99$.

The relationship between school culture and transformational leadership was explored using both quantitative and qualitative data. Using quantitative data, Pearson product moment correlation

coefficients (Table 4.13) showed that transformational leadership was positively and significantly related to most aspects of school culture.

In particular, transformational leadership was found to have a moderate positive and significant relationship with Teacher Collaboration ($r = .483$, $p < .01$) and Collegial Support ($r = .301$, $p < .01$).

A very strong positive correlation was established between transformational leadership and Professional Development ($r = .858$, $p < .01$), which indicates that transformational leadership is a strong correlate of professional growth activities in schools. Similarly, a strong positive and significant correlation was established between transformational leadership and Learning Partnership ($r = .682$, $p < .01$), which indicates that transformational leaders are more likely to develop partnerships that benefit student learning.

On the other hand, the correlation between transformational leadership and Unity of Purpose was weak, negative, and not significant ($r = -.167$, $p = .099$). This finding indicates that transformational leadership does not have a significant impact on teachers' shared understanding and commitment to the school's mission.

The qualitative findings tended to confirm and supplement these quantitative findings. The teachers believed that transformational leaders facilitate professional development, foster cooperation, and build supportive conditions through recognition of teachers' efforts and stimulation of innovation. A teacher said, "Our principal always encourages us to adopt new approaches to teaching and recognizes our efforts, which makes us feel valued." On the other hand, school administrators spoke about attempts to enhance partnership in learning through better communication with parents and student participation in academic goal-setting.

However, in line with the quantitative result on Unity of Purpose, some participants acknowledged the difficulty of aligning staff completely with the mission of the school. Some teachers revealed that while the goals of the school are shared, not all staff members are able to embrace them. As one principal stated, "We share the goals of the school, but not all teachers are able to align their work with the mission."

In general, the combined results indicate that transformational leadership has a significant and positive effect on important school culture dimensions, especially professional development, teacher collaboration, support among teachers, and partnerships for learning. However, its impact on unity of purpose is minimal and statistically insignificant.

4.4.2. Relationships of school culture and Transactional Leadership

Table 10: Correlation Matrix for Transactional Leadership and Dimensions of School Culture (N = 99)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Transactional Leadership	1					
2. Teacher Collaboration	.214*	1				
3. Unity of Purpose	.288**	-.108	1			
4. Professional Development	.295**	.470**	-.054	1		
5. Collegial Support	.154	.114	-.148	.170	1	
6. Learning Partnership	.115	.391**	-.168	.702**	.030	1

Note.

- $p < .05$ (2-tailed).
- ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

All correlations are based on N = 99.

The correlation between school culture and transactional leadership was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, as shown in Table 4.14. The findings suggest that there are positive correlations between transactional leadership and various aspects of school culture, although the magnitude of these correlations is mostly weak to moderate in nature.

To be specific, the analysis revealed a weak but positive and statistically significant correlation between Teacher Collaboration and transactional leadership ($r = .214$, $p < .05$), suggesting that there is a modest positive relationship between transactional leadership behaviors and enhanced collaboration among teachers. A moderate positive and statistically significant correlation was found between Unity of Purpose and transactional leadership ($r = .288$, $p < .01$), suggesting that

there is a positive relationship between transactional leadership and teachers' commitment to the school's mission and goals. Likewise, Professional Development was found to have a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation with transactional leadership ($r = .295, p < .01$), suggesting that there is a positive relationship between transactional leadership behaviors and teachers' engagement in professional development activities.

By contrast, the correlations between transactional leadership and Collegial Support ($r = .154, p = .129$) and Learning Partnership ($r = .115, p = .257$) were positive but not statistically significant. These results indicate that transactional leadership is not a factor that has a significant impact on building collegial trust among staff members or on developing partnerships for learning.

The results are supported by the qualitative findings. The teachers and school principals indicated that the application of transactional leadership, such as articulating expectations, monitoring performance, and rewarding performance, has contributed to keeping the school in order and maintaining structured collaboration. A teacher stated, “Our principal makes sure that good performance is recognized and that we work according to clear guidelines, which helps us stay on track.”

The participants also indicated that transactional leadership might not be a factor that has a significant impact on building strong collegial relationships or partnerships for learning. These relationships were described as needing motivational, inspirational, and trust-building approaches.

Taken together, the results of this study suggest that transactional leadership is a positive force in relation to certain structural aspects of school culture, namely teacher collaboration, unity of purpose, and professional development, although it has no effect on collegial support and learning partnerships. This suggests that, although transactional leadership is an important part of the structure of the organization and its goals, it may be necessary to supplement this type of leadership with other forms of leadership in order to create a fully supportive school culture.

4.4.3. Relationships of school culture and Laissez-faire Leadership

Table 11: Correlational Matrix for Laissez-faire leadership and School Culture

Correlation Matrix for Laissez-faire Leadership and Dimensions of School Culture (N = 99)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Laissez-faire Leadership	1					
2. Teacher Collaboration	.004	1				
3. Unity of Purpose	.117	-.108	1			
4. Professional Development	.035	.470**	-.054	1		
5. Collegial Support	.156	.114	-.148	.170	1	
6. Learning Partnership	-.065	.391**	-.168	.702**	.030	1

Note.

- ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

All correlations are based on $N = 99$.

The correlation between school culture and laissez-faire leadership was analyzed through Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, as shown in Table 4.15. The findings show that there are no statistically significant correlations between laissez-faire leadership and any of the five dimensions of school culture in this study.

More specifically, the correlation between laissez-faire leadership and Teacher Collaboration ($r = .004$, $p = .967$), Unity of Purpose ($r = .117$, $p = .250$), Professional Development ($r = .035$, $p = .731$), Collegial Support ($r = .156$, $p = .122$), and Learning Partnership ($r = -.065$, $p = .524$) was found to be weak and statistically non-significant. These results imply that the presence of laissez-faire leadership does not have any significant positive or negative effects on the important aspects of school culture in the studied schools. The very small correlation coefficient for Teacher Collaboration and the small negative correlation coefficient for Learning Partnership also support the minimal practical impact of laissez-faire leadership.

The qualitative data supported these quantitative findings. Teachers and principals defined laissez-faire leadership as having limited supervision, limited guidance, and limited involvement in school improvement initiatives. Participants suggested that when leaders take a laissez-faire approach, teachers tend to work autonomously without a unified direction. A teacher said, “If the

principal is not directly involved, we are left to fend for ourselves, and there is no encouragement to work together.”

The school principals also agreed that if there is limited monitoring and limited strategic guidance, it may lead to disjointed practices and decreased collective participation. This can make it difficult to create a unified, collaborative, and goal-driven school culture.

In general, the combined results clearly show that laissez-faire leadership does not make a significant contribution to enhancing any aspect of school culture investigated in this research. The lack of significant statistical associations, together with the participants' views of a lack of leadership engagement, further emphasizes the limited role of a passive approach to leadership in developing collaboration, growth, support, partnerships, and shared purpose in schools.

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. Dominant Leadership Styles Practiced by Principals

The descriptive statistics revealed that transactional leadership was the most dominant style practiced by principals in secondary schools of Gode City Administration ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.908$), followed by transformational leadership ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.08$), while laissez-faire leadership was the least prevalent ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.999$; see Tables 10–12). These means, on a 5-point Likert scale, indicate a moderate-to-high presence of structured and inspirational approaches with limited hands-off delegation. Transactional leadership's prominence was reflected in high item means for teacher involvement in policy decisions ($M = 4.22$) and maintenance of professional knowledge ($M = 3.98$), underscoring principals' reliance on rules, rewards, and accountability (Northouse, 2007). Qualitative data from principal interviews corroborated this, with one principal noting, “We follow clear guidelines from the regional education bureau to ensure discipline and results, especially with teachers from different regions.” This aligns with Bass and Riggio's (2006) conceptualization of transactional leadership as contingent reward and management-by-exception, particularly effective in hierarchical, centralized systems such as Ethiopia's public education sector. Transformational leadership, though slightly less dominant, demonstrated strength in facilitating collaboration ($M = 4.73$) and rewarding innovation ($M = 4.11$), consistent with teachers' focus group comments: “The principal motivates us to try new methods for student engagement.” However, lower means for

seeking external ideas ($M = 2.92$) highlight constraints imposed by Gode's geographic isolation. Laissez-faire leadership's lower prevalence, such as in teacher autonomy ($M = 3.49$), suggests avoidance of complete delegation, possibly due to risks in managing multi-ethnic staff; a supervisor remarked, "Hands-off leadership leads to inconsistency; we need active guidance to align with national standards" (cf. Eshete, 2021). In contrast to Lerra's (2020) findings in Wolaita Zone, where democratic (transformational) styles predominated, Gode's transactional emphasis may reflect Somali Regional State's priorities for uniformity amid ethnic diversity and security challenges, as well as the Ministry of Education's (2021) ESDP VI focus on structured ethos-building. The gender imbalance among respondents (77.8% male) and prevalence of underqualified teachers (40.4% below first-degree level) likely reinforce transactional approaches to manage competence gaps.

4.5.2. Dimensions of School Culture

School culture in the studied secondary schools was moderately positive across its five dimensions, with professional development emerging as the strongest ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.808$) and learning partnership the weakest ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.942$; see Tables 5–9). Teacher collaboration showed robust agreement ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.953$), particularly in idea-sharing ($M = 4.74$) and protected planning time ($M = 4.70$), aligning with Gruenert and Valentine's (1998) model of constructive dialogue. A teacher confirmed, "We share lesson plans weekly," though lower support for risk-taking ($M = 3.56$) indicates caution in innovation (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Unity of purpose was evident ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.864$), with strong mission direction ($M = 4.72$) but weaker active teacher support ($M = 3.47$), suggesting top-down alignment without full internalization (Fullan & Quinn, 2020). Professional development was highly valued ($M = 4.82$ for knowledge base), yet limited by external networking ($M = 3.61$), attributable to Gode's remoteness. Collegial support was moderate ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.995$), with trust present ($M = 3.84$) but willingness to help lower ($M = 3.69$), possibly due to cliques among diverse staff. Learning partnership lagged ($M = 3.74$), despite strong parent trust in teachers ($M = 4.47$), hindered by infrequent communication ($M = 3.20$) linked to nomadic lifestyles and language barriers. These patterns resonate with Stergios et al.'s (2017) view of dynamic yet fragile cultures but diverge from Cogaltay and Karadag's (2016) findings of strong positive cultures enhancing efficacy. In Gode's arid, multi-ethnic context (99% Somali students, diverse teachers), fragmented elements persist, consistent with Stoll's (2000) typology.

4.5.3. Relationships between Leadership Styles and School Culture

Correlation analyses demonstrated differential impacts of leadership styles on school culture dimensions (see Tables 13–15). Transformational leadership exhibited strong positive correlations with professional development ($r = .858, p < .01$) and learning partnership ($r = .682, p < .01$), and moderate correlations with teacher collaboration ($r = .483, p < .01$) and collegial support ($r = .301, p < .01$), but a weak, non-significant link with unity of purpose ($r = -.167, p = .099$). These findings support Tucker and Russell's (2004) assertion that transformational leaders drive cultural change through inspiration and intellectual stimulation. Teachers noted, "Motivation builds partnerships," while the weak unity correlation may stem from mission communication gaps in diverse settings (Jdetawy, 2018). Transactional leadership showed moderate positive correlations with collaboration ($r = .214, p < .05$), unity of purpose ($r = .288, p < .01$), and professional development ($r = .295, p < .01$), but non-significant associations with collegial support ($r = .154, p > .05$) and learning partnership ($r = .115, p > .05$), aligning with Yukl's (2008) emphasis on structure for stability. A teacher observed, "Rewards ensure alignment," though relational depth requires complementary styles (Aruzie et al., 2018). Laissez-faire leadership displayed no significant correlations across all dimensions (all $r < .156, p > .05$), reinforcing Northouse's (2007) critique of passivity's ineffectiveness; interviewees reported, "No direction causes fragmentation." Statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$) for transformational and transactional styles confirm their positive influence on culture, addressing the third research question, whereas laissez-faire contributes minimally. Implied regression suggests transformational leadership predicts substantial variance in professional development ($r^2 \approx .73$).

4.5.4. Implications, Limitations, and Comparisons

The findings imply that principals should integrate transformational elements for growth with transactional structures for accountability, as recommended by Leithwood and Sun (2018). In Gode, culturally sensitive leadership training could mitigate diversity challenges. Limitations include the small sample (two schools), potential self-report bias, and delimitation excluding explicit autocratic/democratic styles despite overlap. Compared to Eshete's (2021) democratic dominance and Lerra's (2020) similar results, Gode's transactional-transformational blend suits regional exigencies but lags in partnerships. Overall, dominant transactional-transformational styles cultivate a moderately positive culture with significant linkages except for laissez-faire;

targeted enhancements in unity and partnerships could elevate educational outcomes in this context.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study. It begins by summarizing the major results related to the relationship between school culture and principals' leadership styles in secondary schools of Gode City Administration. The summary highlights the key findings in relation to the study objectives and research questions. Based on these findings, the chapter provides conclusions that reflect the overall implications of the study. Finally, it offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educational leaders, and researchers to improve leadership practices and strengthen positive school culture in secondary schools.

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

This study examined the relationship between school culture and principals' leadership styles in two public secondary schools in Gode City Administration, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia. A mixed-methods descriptive survey design was employed, using questionnaires administered to 90 teachers (100% return rate), semi-structured interviews with 6 principals and 3 supervisors, and a focus group discussion with 2 student representatives. Reliability of the School Culture Survey ($\alpha = 0.699\text{--}0.843$) and Leadership Style Instrument ($\alpha = 0.840\text{--}0.867$) was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding acceptable thresholds.

Dominant Leadership Styles: Transactional leadership emerged as the most practiced style ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.908$), followed by transformational leadership ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.08$), while laissez-faire leadership was least prevalent ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.999$). Principals emphasized structured accountability and policy adherence, reflecting regional and national educational directives (Ministry of Education, 2021).

School Culture Dimensions: School culture was moderately positive. Professional development was strongest ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.808$), driven by teachers' commitment to updating pedagogical knowledge. Teacher collaboration ($M = 4.13$) and unity of purpose ($M = 4.08$) were also strong, supported by protected planning time and clear mission direction. However, collegial support ($M = 3.86$) and learning partnership ($M = 3.74$) were weaker, limited by inconsistent mutual assistance and poor teacher–parent communication.

Relationships Between Variables: Pearson correlation analyses revealed significant positive relationships between transformational leadership and professional development ($r = .858, p < .01$), learning partnership ($r = .682, p < .01$), teacher collaboration ($r = .483, p < .01$), and collegial support ($r = .301, p < .01$), but not unity of purpose ($r = -.167, p = .099$). Transactional leadership showed moderate positive correlations with collaboration ($r = .214, p < .05$), unity of purpose ($r = .288, p < .01$), and professional development ($r = .295, p < .01$). Laissez-faire leadership exhibited no significant correlations with any cultural dimension (all $p > .05$). Qualitative data triangulated these findings, highlighting transformational leaders' role in fostering innovation and transactional leaders' contribution to structural alignment.

5.2. Conclusion

The study concludes that transactional and transformational leadership styles coexist and significantly shape a moderately positive school culture in Gode's secondary schools, whereas laissez-faire leadership has negligible influence. Transactional leadership provides essential structure and accountability in a context marked by teacher under-qualification, ethnic diversity, and centralized policy enforcement. Transformational leadership, though slightly less dominant, powerfully drives professional growth, collaboration, and stakeholder partnerships critical for long-term cultural vitality. The absence of a significant relationship between transformational leadership and unity of purpose suggests that inspirational leadership alone cannot ensure full mission internalization without deliberate communication strategies. The weak learning partnership dimension underscores systemic barriers geographic isolation, nomadic parental lifestyles, and language diversity that hinder family school engagement.

Overall, leadership style is a pivotal determinant of school culture, supporting prior research (Eshete, 2021; Leithwood & Sun, 2018; Tucker & Russell, 2004) while revealing context-specific nuances in Ethiopia's Somali region. A balanced leadership approach combining transactional clarity with transformational vision is essential for cultivating a cohesive, improvement-oriented school culture.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Somali Regional Education Bureau and Gode City Administration Education Office:
 - Develop and implement mandatory leadership training programs for principals, emphasizing blended transformational–transactional practices. Training should include modules on mission communication, cultural sensitivity, and stakeholder engagement tailored to multi-ethnic and nomadic contexts.
 - Establish a regional professional learning community (PLC) network to overcome geographic isolation, enabling regular knowledge exchange, seminars, and peer observation across schools.
- b. School Principals:
 - Strengthen unity of purpose by conducting termly mission review workshops with all staff to co-construct and internalize school goals.
 - Enhance learning partnerships through structured parent–teacher forums, SMS-based progress updates, and bilingual (Somali–Amharic) communication materials to bridge linguistic and mobility barriers.
 - Promote collegial support via peer mentoring systems and recognition programs for collaborative problem-solving.
- c. Ministry of Education (MoE):
 - Revise principal appointment criteria to require formal training in educational leadership and management, addressing the current gap where most principals lack such preparation.
 - Integrate school culture audits into the national school improvement program (SIP), using validated tools like the School Culture Survey to monitor progress annually.
- d. Researchers and Higher Education Institutions:
 - Conduct longitudinal and comparative studies across Ethiopia’s regions to determine how leadership–culture dynamics vary by socio-cultural and economic context.
 - Explore the impact of teacher qualification levels and gender composition on leadership effectiveness and school culture in under-resourced regions.
- e. Teacher Training Institutes:

- Incorporate modules on collaborative practice, cultural responsiveness, and parent engagement into pre-service and in-service teacher education to build a foundation for positive school culture from the outset.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can foster a more cohesive, supportive, and high-performing school culture that aligns with Ethiopia's educational aspirations under ESDP VI and beyond.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I: Survey Questionnaire

Dear respondent, my name is **Abdi Ahmed Marsheye** I am master's student at Haramaya University in the department Educational Planning and Management. Currently, I am conducting my Thesis with the topics entitled “**The Relationship between School Culture and Principals’ Leadership Styles in Secondary Schools of Gode City Administration, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia.**” The data collected will be used in the study to fulfill partial requirement of the second-degree (MA) Masters of arts in Educational Planning and Management. I am inviting you to participate in this research project by filling out a short research questionnaire attached herewith. I kindly request your time to provide me with reliable information so that the findings of this study would meet the intended outcome. Your cooperation in responding the questions is very crucial for the success of the study. Therefore, I politely request your cooperation to respond the questions appropriately.

ANNEX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS INFORMATION

1. Age

A) 18–25 B) 26–35 C) 36–45 D) 56 and above

2. Highest education level

A) Masters B. Bachelors C. Diploma D. Certificate

3. Teaching experience

A. 2 to 5 years B. 6 to 10 years C.11 to 15 years D.16 to 20 years
E.21 to 25 years F.26 years and above

SECTION 2: SCHOOL CULTURE

To what degree do these statements describe the conditions at your school?

Rate each statement on the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree

5=Strongly Agree

1. Teacher collaboration

	Ratings				
Teacher collaboration	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Leaders value teachers' ideas.					
Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.					
Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.					
Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.					
Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.					
Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.					
My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.					
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.					
Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.					
Administrators protect instruction and planning time.					
Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.					

2. Unity of purpose

	Ratings				
Unity of purpose	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers support the mission of the school.					
The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.					
Teachers understand the mission of the school.					
The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.					
Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.					

3. Professional development

	Ratings				
Professional development	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.					
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.					
Professional development is valued by the faculty.					
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.					
The faculty values school improvement					

4. Collegial support

	Ratings				
Collegial support	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers trust each other					
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.					
Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.					
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.					

5. Learning partnership

	Ratings				
Learning partnership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.					
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.					
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance					

Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.					
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SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP STYLES

1. Transformational leadership

	Ratings				
Transformational leadership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.					
Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.					
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.					
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.					
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.					
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.					
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.					

2. Transactional leadership

	Ratings				
Transactional leadership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.					
My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously					
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.					
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.					

3. Laissez-faire leadership

	Ratings				
Laissez-faire leadership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.					
Teachers have freedom to do as they think best in the interest of promoting progress in this school.					
Teachers are not interfered with when making decisions that promote progress in this school.					

Thanks for your cooperation!!!

