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## Perception of the Effect of School Heads' Leadership Style on Students' Learning

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**Abstract:** The study objective concentrated on the Perception of the Effect of School Heads' Leadership Style on Students' Learning. To achieve these goals, appropriate research questions were developed to elicit opinions and general concepts about how respondents perceive their school leaders' leadership competencies and the typical leadership style they employ. The study focused on three common leadership styles: democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, and how each may affect children's school learning. To achieve these objectives, relevant research questions were devised to gather respondents' thoughts and basic notions about how they see their school leaders' leadership abilities and the usual leadership style they utilize. The study's overall sample size was 324 people, with 61 teachers (51 men and 10 females) and 263 pupils (151 males and 112 females) serving as responders. The study's findings revealed that the respondents had varying educational degrees and had worked in the schools surveyed for more than three years. This demonstrates that the respondents were already familiar with the leadership styles of their various school principals. The study established that the majority of the respondents who participated in the study were between 15 and 50 years of age. A descriptive design was implemented for a study using a simple random sampling technique to select participating teachers and students to respond to questionnaire items. The acquired data was efficiently analyzed using the Social Sciences Statistical Package (SPSS) version 28. The data findings were analyzed and discussed in light of the research study's objectives. The report also suggests that, because the study only looked at public senior high schools, a comparable study be carried out in private senior high schools in the towns for comparison.

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**Keywords:** students, school heads, leadership style, students learning

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the aspects influencing students' learning in senior high schools is the leadership of school heads. Schools all across the world strive to prepare pupils to excel in their future endeavors. According to (Ojo, 2022), the majority of school-going children in many poor countries get schooling that does not translate into meaningful learning. (Pardo-Garcia & Barac, 2020). Ghana's government has failed to meet its aim of delivering high-quality education that leads to high academic accomplishment. (Chen et al., 2022)As a result, stakeholders have determined to reverse the downward trend in academic achievement through research, instructional materials, high-quality teachers, remuneration, incentives, and increased discipline, but with limited success. (Tatipang et al., 2022)It is evident that every individual works under some form of supervision in order to improve his or her abilities. Despite the fact that the selected public senior high schools have qualified school heads who use a variety of leadership styles in their different schools, students' academic achievement has remained average over the last few years(Nushi et al., 2022).

Though numerous elements influence students' academic performance, leadership style plays a critical part in its quality. Scholars and academics like as Kruse (2013), Munir and Zafar (2018), Kouzes and Posner (2018), Bush (2015), Abasilim, Gberevbie and Osibanjo (2019), (Hidayat et al., 2022) and have found that the leadership styles of school heads have a considerable impact on students learning. Nonetheless, the results of several of this research on the influence of school heads' leadership styles on students learning are mixed, and only a few of them agree on their conclusions. (Hailikari et al., 2022)There is a gap between current research and descriptions of leadership relationships and their impact on students learning. The purpose of this study sought to look at the possible effects and factors of

school heads leadership styles on students learning at five (5) selected senior high schools in the Sunyani and Sunyani West municipalities of the Bono region against the backdrop of the schools' history of average academic performance.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Area

The study was carried out at five Senior High Schools in the municipalities of Sunyani and Sunyani West, which are two of the twelve administrative districts of Ghana's Bono region. The main rationale for selecting these locations was that they were affordable in terms of the research budget and the sample weight that could be handled satisfactorily. The researcher has also worked in these areas for the previous twelve (12) years, making it simple to collect relevant data on leadership styles and student academic achievement in senior high schools. According to the researcher, no previous research on the same issue in the chosen places has been undertaken.

### Research Design

The researcher adopted a descriptive study strategy to collect quantifiable information for statistical analysis of the population sample in order to successfully perform an in-depth examination of the leadership styles utilized by the various heads in the selected schools. Furthermore, employing a descriptive research methodology offers for adaptability and flexibility, allowing the researcher to employ a range of approaches to attain the intended study results. To finish the study, the researcher employed a quantitative research approach to ascertain systematic analysis of phenomena by collecting quantifiable data and conducting statistical, mathematical, or computational procedures. This was required in order for the researcher to collect the sorts of data required to effectively finish the thesis. Quantitative analysis is concerned with numerical data or the estimation of amount or volume. To finish the study, the researcher employed a quantitative research approach to ascertain systematic analysis of phenomena by collecting quantifiable data and conducting statistical, mathematical, or computational procedures. This was required in order for the researcher to collect the sorts of data required to effectively finish the thesis. Quantitative analysis is concerned with numerical data or the estimation of amount or volume. As a result, it can be applied to phenomena that can be quantified. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the study participants.

### Data collection procedure

The researcher received an introduction letter for data collection from the Dean, Faculty of Education, Catholic University College of Ghana, and Fiapre. The letter was used to request permission to conduct research at the selected senior high schools in Sunyani and Sunyani West Municipalities in Ghana's Bono Region. The data collection started in the second term of the 2019/2020 academic year, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an indefinite break until the final year students reported for their examination to exit their SHS studies in July 2020 and subsequently the continuous students resumed.

The researcher then made periodic visits to the selected schools to notify the head and to request the appointment with the expected research. Respondents who anonymously came up to support the researcher were taken through the prepared questionnaires and how to administer them. The questionnaires administered in the absence of the researcher were been obtained and tracked from all their five assistant school heads (academic).

### Data Analysis

The researcher checked the questionnaires for completeness, correctness, and the quality of the information obtained after gathering all of the relevant data. The aggregated answer data was statistically calculated using SPSS software version 28 after combining the obtained data. The study included both descriptive and inferential statistics (T-test). Frequency distribution tables were used to provide demographic information to all respondents in Section A of each questionnaire. Sections B, C, D and E were analysed based on the Likert-rating scale to assess the impact of leadership styles on student academic success by looking at the relationship between categories and trends that would imply generalizations and conclusions (Best & Kahn, 2006) based on the goals and research questions of the study. The processed data was carefully discussed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation. Other processed

data provided were in the form of percentages and tables on which the results of the data were easily interpreted without difficulty. All this has been achieved along the basic objectives of this report. All data obtained were quantitatively reported. A range of steps were taken to analyse quantitative data, including data clearing, data coding, data presentation and interpretation and discussion.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics for teachers**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.969	.975	66

Author's Field survey, 2021

**Table 2: Summary Item Statistics for teachers**

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.621	1.500	4.500	3.000	3.000	.685	66

Author's Field survey, 2021

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics for students**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.903	.902	52

Author's Field survey, 2021

**Table 4: Summary Item Statistics for students**

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.561	1.543	4.286	2.743	2.778	.350	52

Author's Field survey, 2021

A Test-Retest approach has been used to test the reliability of the instruments. This is because it demonstrates the accuracy of the scores produced by the instrument over time (Kasomo, 2007). However, according to Punch (2008), the Test-Retest is to administer the instrument at two points in time. Punch (2008) contends that a correlation coefficient of above 0.70 implies that the instrument is accurate. The achievement of a co-efficient correlation of 0.96 literally attests to the fact that the instruments were very accurate.

#### **Respondents' perception on the effect of school heads' leadership style on students learning**

In Table 11, the researcher presents the perceived effect of heads' leadership styles on students' learning. This issue was assessed using a 20-item questionnaire. The items were evaluated using a Likert-rating scale coded 1-5, where 1 depicted Strongly Disagree, 2 depicted Disagree, 3 depicted Uncertain, 4, depicted Agree and 5 depicted Strongly Agree. A summary of the results of the analysis can be seen below as follows;

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents' perception on the effect of school heads' leadership style on students learning**

Statement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b><i>School heads' leadership style has effect on students':</i></b>			
Attendance	324	3.96	1.26
Punctuality	324	3.98	1.22
High interest in learning	324	3.88	1.186
Regularity	324	3.85	1.16
Confidence	324	3.75	1.26
Hand in assignments/ home works /project works	324	3.63	1.25
Discipline	324	4.05	1.19
Honesty and forthright	324	3.80	1.22
Exhibition of respect for school property and other students	324	3.74	1.25
Classroom participation	324	3.49	1.24
Attitude towards submitting of class works and examination	324	3.60	1.23
Compete with students in different school	324	3.57	1.35
Focus on academic studies	324	3.98	1.23
Approach to basic understanding of ideas	324	3.60	1.22
Approach to research	324	3.41	1.30
Motivation and learning	324	3.81	1.26
Involvement	324	3.48	1.27
Creativity and innovation	324	3.36	1.36
Relationships	324	3.26	1.28
Goal achievement	324	4.01	1.22
<b>Means of mean</b>		<b>3.71</b>	<b>1.24</b>

**Source: Author's Field Survey, 2021**

The results of the analysis in table 5 revealed that, a school heads' leadership style has an effect on how disciplined a student turns out to be. This was inferred from mean of 4.05 and standard deviation of 1.19. This implies that, the majority of the respondents agreed considerably that school heads' leadership style influences how discipline students would be. The findings of the study further revealed that, school heads' leadership style influences students' academic achievement. This was inferred from a mean of 4.01 and standard deviation of 1.22. From this, it can be deduced that, the majority of the respondents agreed to this assertion though some responses varied otherwise.

In addition, it was observed from the study that, the leadership style a school head adopts affects the student's focus. This can be inferred from a mean of 3.98 and standard deviation of 1.23. It can be deduced from this that, the majority of the respondents agreed to this assertion though there were some levels of variations in the finding. (Tatipang et al., 2022) buttressed this finding indicating that democratic and autocratic leadership styles have a substantial effect on students' academic performance, while laissez-faire leadership style has been found to have an insignificant impact on student academic performance. (Hagenauer et al., 2022) added by stating that, the effects of school leadership could be either direct or indirect, each of which was found to have contributed to an improvement in student academic results.

More so, the study revealed that, the kind of heads' leadership style affects students' attendance. This was inferred from a mean of 3.96 and standard deviation of 1.26. Thus, the majority of the respondents agree that, the level of students' attendance can be influenced by the leadership style of a head.

Another aspect that was revealed to be affected by school heads' leadership style is students' punctuality. This was observed from the mean of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.22. It can be implied from this that, students are likely to be punctual based on the leadership style that is adopted by school heads.

In addition, factors such as high interest in learning, regularity, confidence, honesty and forthright are influenced by the leadership style adopted by a school head. This can be inferred from a mean range of 3.75 - 3.88 and a standard deviation range of 1.16 - 1.26. Thus, the majority of the respondents agreed that, these factors are influenced by school heads' leadership style.

Also, other factors such as doing assignments/home works/project works, exhibition of respect for school property and other students, classroom participation and attitude towards submitting of class works and examination can all be influenced by the kind of leadership style adopted by the heads. The mean ranges for these variables are 3.49-3.74 and the standard deviation ranges are 1.22-1.25. It can be inferred from this that, the majority of the respondent agreed to these assertions.

Another set of factors that could be influenced by heads' choice of leadership style include; student involvement, motivation and learning, approach to research, creativity and innovation and relationships. These factors recorded a mean range of 3.26-3.81. These do affirm that; the respondents agree considerably that to views that these factors are influenced by heads' leadership style.

In summary, the table recorded a total mean of 3.71 and standard deviation of 1.24. This implies that, the choice of heads choice of leadership is perceived to have a huge role to play in students' learning. The mean of 3.71 implied the respondents supported that the view that the decision of heads regarding their leadership style is a very important facet in students' learning. Also, the standard deviation of 1.24 reveals that, irrespective of the purported support of respondents, there were some variations in the responses. However, in general, it can be asserted that the majority of the respondents were in support of that heads' leadership style had an influence on student learning. Lathan (2020) buttressed that, "Leaders of education play an essential role in shaping the atmosphere, conduct and reputation of your schools; they are the framework through which the learning group is functioning. Schools become strong incubators for learning with good school leadership, places where students are not only instructed but are challenged, nurtured and encouraged". A Wallace Foundation study in 2010 further supports this finding stating that, leadership is the second only to classroom teaching as an effect on learning to students.

The goals of the education system may be compromised by poor or absent school leadership. In the absence of good foundation and instruction in schools, students are at risk for learning and suffer. It is clear that effective leadership will play a major role in the advancement of student learning that is often ignored. Cruickshank (2017) added on that the standard of teaching and education at their schools and therefore the success of their students will significantly be influenced by improving the working conditions and the atmosphere of their teachers.

#### **Teacher respondents' perception on factors that affect school heads' leadership style**

In Table 6, the researcher shows teachers' perception on the factors that affected the choice of school heads' leadership style. Here, 25 items were adopted to identify the factors that could influence school heads' leadership style. These items were evaluated using a Likert-rating scale coded 1-5, where 1 depicted Strongly Disagree, 2 depicted Disagree, 3 depicted Uncertain, 4, depicted Agree and 5 depicted Strongly Agree. A summary of the results of the analysis shown in the table below;

**Table 6: Distribution of teachers' perception on factors that affect school heads' leadership style**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
The kind of teachers available	61	3.74	1.05
The calibre of students available	61	3.85	.89
The kind of resources available	61	3.93	.89
The class of education directorate supervisors	61	3.52	1.09
The pressure from school board of governors	61	3.25	1.18

The pressure from P.T.A	61	3.23	1.15
The gender of the head	61	2.75	1.34
Age range	61	2.93	1.24
Educational background	61	3.34	1.30
Experience in leadership	61	3.59	1.16
Religious background	61	3.03	1.38
The headmasters' inspiration and motivation	61	3.75	1.11
The headmasters' intellectual ability	61	3.79	1.03
The kind of communication skills	61	3.67	1.04
The kind of interpersonal relationship	61	3.90	.83
The kind of mentorship	61	2.72	1.27
The type of task at hand	61	3.03	1.18
The kind of cooperation and cohesiveness	61	2.95	1.23
Managerial skills	61	2.77	1.29
The kind of personality traits	61	2.95	1.26
Social and political affiliations	61	2.89	1.23
The kind of in-service training	61	3.08	1.22
Stakeholders and donors influence	61	2.93	1.38
Courage and commitment	61	3.10	1.25
Approach to challenges	61	3.46	1.13
<b>Mean of means</b>		<b>3.29</b>	<b>1.16</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

The results of the survey revealed that, the most prominent factor that teachers perceived to affect school heads' leadership style was the kind of resources available. This submission was observed from the results of the survey showing the highest mean which was 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.89. The mean result implies that, the majority of the respondents were in support of the statement. On the other hand, the standard deviation of 0.89 implies that, there was little variation in the responses from the respondents. Naremo (2012) supports this finding stating that, the kind of resources available plays a very pertinent role in the choice of leadership style for school heads.

Another factor that stood out regarding its influence on the choice of leadership style for headmasters was the kind of interpersonal relationship that prevails between teachers and headmasters in the school. This was observed from the results of the survey showing a mean of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.83. It can be inferred from this finding that, the majority of the teachers in the study are of the opinion that school heads choice of leadership style is influenced by how he/she interacts and relates to members of the school. Also, the standard deviation results imply that, there was not much variation in the responses by the respondents. Bimpeh (2012) added on that, a school head who exhibits a high level of interpersonal relationship in the school is unlikely to adopt an autocratic leadership style. Thus, such school heads are quite liberal and skew more toward leadership styles such as democratic and laissez faire.

The calibre of students available was revealed to have a strong influence on the leadership style adopted by school heads. This was observed from a mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.89. This implies that, the majority of the teachers were of the view that, depending on the calibre of students a school head leads he/she is likely to adapt to them based on a leadership style that suits students best. Regarding the standard deviation result, it can be inferred that, there was not much variation in the responses provided by the respondents.

More so, it was observed from the results of the study that, the heads' inspiration and motivation and the heads' intellectual ability played a major role in the choice of leadership style for the school head. This was inferred from a mean of 3.75 and 3.79 respectively. The standard deviation for the recorded means is 1.03 and 1.11. It can be deduced

from these results that, there was some level of variation in the responses. Thus, the respondents to this statement shared a varied view on the consent to this statement. However, the majority of the respondents agreed considerably to the statement. Bimpeh (2012) supported this finding by stating that, a headmaster's intellectual ability and work management factor plays a very important role in the choice of leadership style.

The findings of the study as well revealed that, the kind of teachers available is an important part of a heads' choice of leadership style. This was inferred from a mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.05. Thus, the respondents in the study agreed substantially that heads' choice of leadership style is likely to vary based on the kind of teachers available in the school.

Other factors that were observed to determine the choice of heads' leadership style included; the class of education directorate supervisors, the pressure from school board of governors, the pressure from P.T.A, educational background and experience in leadership. These factors were considered important factors because, their resultant means were above 3.0 and their standard deviation had a range of 1.0-1.30. Among these factors, the highest recorded mean was 3.59 which was for experience in leadership. On the other hand, the least recorded mean was 3.23 which was pressure from P.T.A.

Naremo (2012) highlighted stakeholder demands as a crucial factor in the type of leadership style a headmaster is likely to adopt. The researcher further explained that stakeholder demands such as pressure from parents, teachers, policy makers and the community as whole is likely to influence the choice of leadership style a headmaster is likely to decide on.

In addition, factors such as religious background, the kind of communications skills, type of task at hand, the kind of in-service training, the courage and commitment and the approach to challenges are important in determining school heads' decision on the leadership style to resort. The mean range for these factors were 3.03 - 3.67. On the other hand, the standard deviation range recorded among these factors were 1.04 - 1.25.

Among these factors, the highest mean was 3.67 which had a corresponding standard deviation of 1.04. These values were assigned to the kind of communication skills adopted. Thus, the respondents were of the opinion that, school heads' preference of communication skill affects their choice of leadership style. Bimpeh (2012) supported this finding stating that, a school head is likely to adapt to a particular leadership style based on the level of interpersonal relationship and communication skills that is often exhibited by such a head in the school.

Conversely, the lowest mean among the selected factors was 3.03 for the religious background and the type of task at hand. These factors had a standard deviation of 1.38 and 1.18 respectively. It can be inferred from these standard deviations that the religious background of school heads had a high level of variation in the responses compared to the type of task at hand. Irrespective of this variation, it can be implied from a mean of 3.03 that, there was a considerable level of agreement to this factor with respect to the study.

However, there were other factors that were observed not to have a considerable level of agreement from the respondent's point of view. These factors recorded mean figures which were below of 3.0 and comparatively high standard deviations. Among such factors included, stakeholders and donor influence, social and political affiliations, the kind of personality traits, managerial skills, the kind of cooperation and cohesiveness, the kind of mentorship, the age range and the gender of the head. The mean range for these factors were 2.72-2.95. On the other hand, the standard deviation range for these factors were 1.22-1.38.

Among the factors, the highest mean recorded 2.95 had a standard deviation of 1.23 and 1.26. These figures corresponded to the kind of personality traits and the kind of cooperation and cohesiveness. Thus, among the selected factors, these factors have a comparatively better likelihood of influencing the choice of leadership style adopted by school heads. A surprising revelation among these selected factors is that, the gender of the school head was observed not to have considerable influence on the choice of leadership style. This factor recorded a mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of 1.34.

It can be implied from this that, the responses were quite varied with some respondents likely disagreeing. This is in dissent with Bimpeh (2012) submission that, the gender of a school head has an influence on the leadership style to be adopted. The researcher further explained that, female head of schools often adopt autocratic leadership style compared to male head of schools. This is likely to exert some form of power given the societal perceived weakness of women. Thus, women who head institutions often are entangled with the motivation to prove the strength of a woman among men which might explain their inclination towards being autocratic.

The last issue that engaged the attention of the researcher was to compare the views of the male and female teachers or respondents on the perceived effects of leadership styles on student learning outcomes. The essence of this effort was to ascertain whether both male and female teachers perceive that the kind of a leadership style a head master adopts in the school can influence on the quality of education that the students would receive. In order to achieve this end, independent samples t-test was conducted. The summarised results of the t-test analysis are demonstrated in the table below.

### Correlation on male and female respondents' perceived effect of school heads' leadership style on students learning.

**Table 7: Independent-Samples t-test on perceived effects of school heads' leadership on student learning**

	N	Mean Rating	Mean Diff.	t	df	p-value
Male	202	3.557	.25	-2.395	322	.017
Female	122	3.811				

**Source: Author's Field Survey, 2021**

Table 7 outlines the results for the male and female respondents' perception on the effect of school heads' leadership style on student learning. The total number of female and male respondents were 122 and 202 respectively. The mean statistics for the male respondents perceived effect of school heads' leadership style on students learning was 3.557 whereas their female counterpart was also 3.811. This indicates that the majority of the respondents, both male and female agree that school heads' leadership style has effect of on students learning. Both females and males reported a standard deviation of 1.088 and 0.806 respectively. A standard deviation of 1.088 suggests that the responses were evenly distributed, whereas standard deviation of 0.806 on the part of males suggests that their responses were not evenly distributed.

Concerning the differences in mean scores of the male and female respondents' views, the results show a mean difference of 0.25. The table further indicated independent samples test with t-value of 2.39 and degree of freedom of 322 with corresponding p-value of 0.017 [p-value > 0.05]. Since the p-value is least than 5% significant level, the study accepts the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significance difference between the means of male and female in terms of the perceived effects of school heads' leadership on student learning.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The study's purpose was to discover how school leaders' leadership styles effect students' learning in senior high schools in the Sunyani and Sunyani West Municipalities of Ghana's Bono Region. Four distinct goals were established and identified: the dominant leadership styles embraced by senior high school heads in municipalities; the perceived effects of school heads' leadership styles on students' learning; the factors influencing school heads' leadership style in senior high schools; and the exploration of any differences between male and female perceived effects of school heads' leadership style on students' learning. In addition, the study focused on the three common leadership styles which include democratic leadership style, autocratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership style on how any could influence students' learning process in the school. To achieve these objectives, relevant research questions were



formulated to solicit views and general ideas about how the respondents rate their school heads' leadership capabilities and usual leadership style they practice. The total sample size of the study was 324 comprising 61 teachers (51 males and 10 females) and 263 students (151 males and 112 females) who served as respondents.

The study's findings revealed that the respondents had varying educational degrees and had worked in the schools surveyed for more than three years. This demonstrates that the respondents were already familiar with the leadership styles of their various school principals. The survey found that the majority of those who took part in the study were between the ages of 15 and 50. To ascertain and grasp a comprehensive understanding of the study topic, the set of literature reviewed was essential to provide more ideas, in-depth knowledge and clarity to research questions formulated. The theoretical framework of the study was significant because it provided the researcher with a justification for predictions about the relationship between the variables of the research study (a guide to systematically identifying logical, precisely defined relationships between variables) as well as providing the researcher with a context for the analysis of the research problem, developing relevant hypothesis, framework etc. Variables for the analysis were summarized in the conceptual framework that showed their interrelatedness.

Descriptive design was implemented for a study using a simple random sampling technique to select participating teachers and students to respond to questionnaire items. Data were obtained using the questionnaire, which items were analyzed using mainly descriptive statistics. To analyze the bio data and research questions, mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages were employed. The T-test was employed as an inferential statistical method to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the means of two groups (males and females) that were connected in some way. The acquired data was efficiently analyzed using the Social Sciences Statistical Package (SPSS) version 28. The data findings were analyzed and discussed in light of the research study's objectives.

### Suggestions for further research

The following are the suggested areas for further research:

- i) A replica of the study to be performed in other public senior high schools in other districts in the Bono region of Ghana.
- ii) Since the study only focused in public senior high schools, a similar study should be conducted out in private senior high schools in the municipalities for comparison.
- iii) The researcher suggests that other factors such as socio-economic factors, students' entry behaviour and home environment of students that could also affect performance hence could be explored.

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