

Research Article

Instructional Leadership Practices and Challenges: The Case of Primary School Principals in Liban Jawi Woreda of West Shoa Zone

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This study was conducted to assess the practices and challenges of instructional leadership in primary schools of Liban Jawi Woreda of the West Shoa Zone. In order to address this objective of the study, a descriptive survey design was employed. About 114 teachers, seven principals, six vice principals, and one vice head of Woreda Education Office (WEO) participated in the study. Questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis were data gathering tools. The results showed that most of the problems instructional leaders have a communication gap with the stakeholders on issues related to the vision, mission, and goals of the schools and had problems in relation to lack of educational management profession. It was concluded that instructional leaders have a gap in taking a measure to overcome problems. Therefore, the study mainly recommended that Ministry of Education (MOE) and other stakeholders should give training to instructional leaders to overcome their leadership knowledge and skills, and also principals should create communication channels to overcome communication problems.

1. Introduction

School principals and the concept of instructional leadership have been the issue of research attention for above 3 decades, with efforts directed especially toward understanding whether or not there are identifiable connections between what leaders do, student learning, and the outcomes students achieve [1].

Brolund [2] defined instructional leadership as a school leadership model in which a principal collaborates with teachers to provide support and guidance in developing best practices in teaching. Principals who use this leadership model communicate with their staff and work together to set clear goals for student achievement. The more leaders focus their influence, the learning, and relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes [3].

Coupled with this, Munna [4] clearly stated that instructional leadership can raise the standard of teaching and learning. The principal is a key agent in school leadership,

he or she is in charge of promoting a healthy culture and climate, assisting teacher leadership, establishing and maintaining school improvement teams, and planning, organizing, and monitoring school improvement initiatives [5]. This shows that effective instructional leadership requires the acquisition of expert knowledge and skill in the area of educational activities.

In its review of school leadership literature, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [1] identified three definitive outcomes: first, the domains and dimensions of effective leadership for learning are based on a highly reliable body of research; second, the reconceptualization of leadership for learning as a collective activity or practice in schools involving principals, leadership position holders, teachers, students, parents, and others; and third, the principal's leadership influence has been reinforced, demonstrating that the majority of what happens in school improvement occurs as a result of a principal's commitment to, material support for,

and encouragement of collaborations firmly focused on leadership for student learning.

Nowadays, as many studies show, the context of education is changing rapidly, so educational activities are becoming complex and challenging to lead educational institutions like schools. In line with this idea, Gedifew [6] clearly stated that the concept of instructional leadership has portrayed diverse perceptions where educators concentrated on the personal characteristics of the principals in their definition of instructional leadership.

Bush [7] stated that there is a demand facing school principals in many parts of the world, illustrated recently by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to their accountability for school improvement and student learning and welfare, there is pressure facing those principals in many countries. These demands are particularly challenging in those many countries that do not provide specialized preparation or training for current or prospective principals.

A scoping review conducted by Tintoré et al. [8] to examine the literature on the issues and challenges faced by principals between 2003 and 2019 shows that the principals' major difficulties include balancing system demands with leadership for learning, negotiating needs for autonomy and accountability, and coping with mounting pressure from families and society at large.

The review done by Tamadoni et al. [9] showed that school principals inevitably confronted major challenges in both centralized and decentralized educational systems. Challenges such as the poor professional development of principals, teachers, and staff, alongside low performance and poor working relationships, were traced in both centralized and decentralized educational systems. On the other hand, challenges such as the demotivation and low involvement of parents and stakeholders, bureaucracy, limited autonomy, ambiguity in educational policies, poor governmental support, and ideological tensions were more prevalent in centralized systems than decentralized systems.

Educational leaders need to have professional skills and competencies. Besides this, Gonski et al. [10] argued that to maximize this achievement, principals need to be supported and empowered in two areas: their leadership of learning and their professional learning tailored for each stage of their career.

However, because of the presence of various problems, provisions of competent leadership on part of instructional leaders have been challenged. Even the Ministry of Education Ethiopia [11] argued that principals need to have theoretical knowledge, skill, and adequate experiences in school leadership but research findings show that the majority of school principals in Ethiopia were trained in a subject area; they have not been trained in professional disciplines that make principals in schools face many challenges in performing instructional leadership activities as expected of them. Also, administrative tasks took much of the principals' time rather than instructional activities [12].

Moreover, the study by Hussien [13] identified challenges regarding the selection of instructional leaders in the Ethiopian context as political affiliation and membership. There were no fairness and transparency in the application

of the prescribed criteria. Instructional leadership roles like provision of instructional support and technical assistance, experience sharing and enhancing teachers' professional development, involving experienced teachers and the community in school leadership, securing material support, and planning for proper utilization of resources were found low.

Many major actions were taken by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MOE) to correct those problems. In strengthening teachers and leaders, the development of school staff will focus on two groups: practicing and prospective school leaders and practicing and prospective teachers. A special Leadership and Management Program (LAMP) was initiated to build the capacity of school principals in planning and management [11]. Even though these actions are in place, there is still a serious challenge in the practice of instructional leadership in most Ethiopian public primary schools in general and in most Liban Jawi primary schools in particular.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned statements, one can conclude that more thorough research is still needed to develop recommendations that could assist experts and policy-makers in creating laws intended to address the issue of instructional leadership and balance the roles played by principals in educational settings. In the study area, there were no prior research findings that investigated the challenges faced by instructional leaders by primary school principals. Though, from the above notions, one may depict that the existing situation regarding instructional leadership could affect the quality and practices of instructional leadership in primary schools. Therefore, this study aims to explore the existing practices and challenges of instructional leadership toward primary school principals in Liban Jawi Woreda of West Shoa Zone.

Depending on this main objective, the study goes with the following basic questions:

- (1) To what extent do instructional leaders are accomplishing instructional activities in primary schools of Liban Jawi Woreda?
- (2) What are the major challenges that affect the instructional leadership in practicing their leadership roles in primary schools of Liban Jawi Woreda?
- (3) What measure should be taken to overcome the problems that encounter the primary school instructional leaders?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Principals' Instructional Leadership. Principals' instructional leadership is a concept that has been extensively researched and discussed in the field of educational leadership. Instructional leadership can be defined in two aspects [14]. First, instructional leadership can be defined as the roles or actions of school leaders in leading schools that are reflected in program activities, concerns in curriculum development, teaching and learning values, and qualification [15]. Second, instructional leadership refers to the attitudes that school leaders have toward the process of teaching at their institutions [16]. Both definitions above

revealed common points that explain leading learning in the school as purposive actions [14].

One influential that explores the concept of principals' instructional leadership is the research conducted by Leithwood et al. [17] titled "How Leadership Influences Student Learning." This study highlights the importance of principals' active involvement in instructional leadership and its positive impact on student learning outcomes.

Principals who prioritize instructional leadership practices are more likely to create a school climate that supports effective teaching and engages students in meaningful learning experiences.

Principals' instructional leadership across all school contexts, including rural and urban areas, requires high levels of collaboration and involvement of all school-level stakeholders and the broader community at large [18]. Principals' instructional leadership should include practices that reflect principals shared instructional leadership, transformative leadership, and distributed leadership practices [18, 19]. According to Marks and Printy [20], principals can no longer act alone, and administrators' instructional leadership should be collaborative and build upon the existing capacity of the organization to create a cohesive professional culture.

2.2. Models of Instructional Leadership. Some various models and concepts exist to explain instructional leadership. Those instructional leadership models and theories can be referred to as the Hallinger and Murphy [21] model, Weber's [22] model, Murphy's [23] model, and the McEwan [24] model.

Hallinger and Murphy [21] developed their model of instructional management by examining the instructional leadership behaviors of 10 elementary principals in one school district and conducting a review of the school effectiveness literature. They created a framework of instructional management with three dimensions and 11 job descriptors from the three dimensions of instructional management to create an appraisal instrument of principal instructional management behavior, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The dimension of defining the school mission includes the principal job descriptors of framing school goals and communicating school goals. Managing the instructional program dimension involves working directly with teachers in areas related to curriculum and instruction. Job descriptions included in this dimension consist of supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The dimension of promoting a positive school learning climate consists of principal behaviors' that protect instructional time, promote professional development, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, develop and enforce academic standards, and provide incentives for learning [25].

Murphy (1990) provided a systematic and comprehensive review of instructional leadership that has not been empirically tested [26]. The framework consists of four dimensions broken down into 16 different roles or behaviors. Those dimensions are: developing the mission and goal, promoting quality instruction and monitoring student progress, promoting an inclusive environment of learning, and

creating a supportive working environment. The framework solely takes into account school settings, restricts the functions of principals, and prevents understanding the nature of other roles that are engaged in running a school [27].

Weber [22] also identified another model that consists of five essential domains of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive learning climate, observing and improving instruction, and assessing the instructional program. Weber [22] described the process of defining the school's mission as a dynamic process of cooperation and reflective thinking to create a mission that is clear and honest. The mission of the school should bind the staff, students, and parents to a common vision. Instructional leaders offer the stakeholders the opportunity to discuss values and expectations for the school. Together, they work to create a shared mission for the school. Therefore, this study attempts to measure instructional leadership practices and challenges related to three-dimensional models of instructional leadership described by Hallinger [28] model of instructional leadership: defining the schools' mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive school learning climate; and functions within each dimension: framing the schools' goals and communicating the school's mission, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning.

2.3. Challenges of Instructional Leadership. The instructional leader faces numerous challenges. According to Brolund [2], principals do not have enough time to complete their instructional tasks, they are not comfortable having difficult conversations, and they sometimes lack the knowledge base to support teachers fully.

Tintore et al. [8] identified the two main challenges facing school principals: (1) problems with leadership and management practices, arising from the complex nature of the job; and (2) problems with leadership and management practices, arising from interactions with different stakeholders. Additionally, they identified school leaders facing the challenges, including balancing system demands with leadership for learning, navigating pressures for autonomy and accountability, and increasing pressures from families and the wider society. This review also identified some principals in decentralized educational systems who had no specific programs to involve parents or the local community in school matters.

Bush [7] identified that the major challenges for instructional leaders include buildings in poor condition, small budgets, and high teacher turnover. The heads were also teaching leaders, and the authors conclude that they are passionate, strategic thinkers, instructionally driven, and avid learners. Principals were more skilled at advocating their own position than in deeply inquiring into and checking their understanding of the views of the parents or teachers [29].

From this, it can be understood that there were many challenges that faced principal instructional leadership in the

schools, i.e., challenges relating to evaluating instruction, promoting change, improving teachers' instruction, implementing research-based practices, and meeting students' needs.

2.4. Summary of Instructional Leadership in Ethiopia. The Education and training policy document of Ethiopia [30] stated that school leaders should be professionals, which requires special development for leading schools. The Education Development Road Map of Ethiopia [31] document also shows that school leadership in Ethiopia is generally weak, limiting the leadership capacities of school leaders at all levels of education. According to Gurmu [32], the denial of principalship to professional graduates and the political affiliation lens is a scenario that informs principals' selection for leadership positions. The duration of the primary school principals' training is short, and its curriculum lacks depth and breadth.

In the Ethiopian context, the MOE pointed out that school principals as instructional leaders have the following roles in Ethiopia: creating a shared vision and clear goals for their schools and ensuring continuous progress toward achieving the goals; engaging parents and community members in the educational process; creating an environment where community resources support student learning, achievement, and well-being; supporting the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students; and allocating resources and managing school operations in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment [33].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design. As mentioned earlier, the major purpose of this study is to explore the existing practices and challenges of instructional leadership in primary schools in Liban Jawi Woreda. According to Creswell [34], the goal or purpose of the investigation determines the research design that will be used. Thus, this study adopted a descriptive survey design because it generally helped to gather data with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions and then drawing conclusions from the facts discovered. It also helps to draw valid general conclusions [35].

3.2. Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques. The entire primary schools found in Liban Jawi Woreda of West Shoa Zone were the study areas. According to the 2020/2021 statistical data (unpublished) of the Liban Jawi Woreda Education Office (WEO), there were 27 primary schools and seven cluster resource centers (CRC) found in the Woreda. Also, there were a total of 364 teachers, principals, and vice principals found in the primary schools of the Woreda. The cluster sampling technique and purposive sampling were employed in this study. The former one was employed to take a sample of schools, principals, vice principals, and teachers. In cluster sampling, the sampling frame is identified, and from this population, specific clusters are chosen through simple random sampling. Once a cluster is chosen for inclusion in the sample, all members of the cluster are

surveyed [36]. Therefore, the researchers took one school from one CRC, and, finally, seven primary schools were selected by random sampling. Accordingly, all seven principals, six vice principals, and 114 teachers found in those seven schools were included as a sample in this study.

The latter purposive sampling technique was employed to take a sample of WEO vice head in order to get in-depth and detailed information about the practice and challenges of instructional leadership in the primary schools of Woreda at present.

3.3. Data Gathering Tools. The data gathering tools employed in the study were questionnaires and interviews.

3.3.1. Questionnaire. A questionnaire was used to collect data on principal instructional leadership practices. The researchers used the teachers' and principals' versions of the PIMRS survey instrument, developed by [21], to assess the instructional leadership practices of the principal of a primary school. The PIMRS is a standardized instrument that was given to teachers, vice principals, and principals in order to gather pertinent information about the study area. It has only 10 close-ended questions. But those questions used to measure the challenges of instructional leadership were self-made. With the exception of language, every item on the principal instructional leadership instrument was the same for teachers and principals in terms of content.

Close-ended questions were designed in the form of a 5-point style or Likert scale (from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree") for the leaders' practice and ("1 = no problem" to "5 = serious problem") for the challenges that hinder instructional leadership practices. The questionnaires were coded and administered by the researcher. Close-ended questions provide guidance that might encourage the respondents to have more interest in answering the questions.

3.3.2. Interview. The interview was conducted with in-depth data that might not be possible with questionnaires. In addition, it helps the researchers to cross-check findings from the survey questionnaires. In line with this idea, the structured interview questions were prepared to gather relevant information from the vice head of WEO because this respondent had in-depth and detailed information about the practices and challenges found in the primary schools of the Woreda.

3.4. Method of Data Analysis. The data collected from respondents were analyzed by both quantitative and qualitative methods, i.e., the data collected through close-ended questionnaires were organized by SPSS and analyzed by statistical tools such as mean and standard deviations of each table. The analysis of IL practice and its challenges was done based on both the principal's dataset and the teacher's dataset.

Data gathered through questionnaires were quantitatively analyzed and interpreted with mean scores. Also, data collected through interviews were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively in sentence form. Therefore, the mean values less than 1.80 showed strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60 as disagree, 2.61–3.40 as a medium, 3.41–4.20 as agree, and 4.21–5.00 as strongly agree for the practice of IL and the measures taken to solve the challenges. Again, the mean

TABLE 1: Respondents view on instructional leaders practice of their leadership role.

No.	Item description: school principal as an instructional leader	Response	Respondents			Total mean score
			Teachers (n = 114)	Principals (n = 7)	Vice principals (n = 6)	
1	Defines vision, mission, and goals of the school in clear and concrete words and communicating with the school stakeholders	Mean	2.37	2.29	2.47	2.37
		SD	0.95	0.488	1.033	
2	Communicates the vision, mission, and goals of the school with teachers, students, and parents	Mean	2.61	2.72	2.43	2.58
		SD	0.97	0.690	0.983	
3	Supervises and evaluates teaching learning activities with teachers	Mean	3.47	3.43	3.50	3.47
		SD	0.96	0.535	0.548	
4	Facilitates conditions for students to get adequate educational materials and services	Mean	3.05	2.71	2.83	3.04
		SD	0.89	0.577	0.983	
5	Discusses with students themselves, teachers, and parents to enhance the students' academic achievement	Mean	2.05	2.71	2.83	2.53
		SD	0.98	0.488	0.753	
6	Ensures the presence of appropriate use of instructional time	Mean	2.37	2.57	2.13	2.35
		SD	0.97	0.535	0.753	
7	Facilitates provision of on-job training, workshops, and seminars for teachers to promote their professional development	Mean	2.44	2.71	3.67	2.43
		SD	1.06	0.488	0.516	
8	Plays important roles to make the schools' environment clean, comfortable, and safe for learning	Mean	3.39	3.43	3.33	3.40
		SD	0.97	0.535	0.516	
9	Provides incentives for teachers and students to develop their motivation in teaching learning activities	Mean	2.16	3.29	2.17	2.54
		SD	1.01	0.488	0.983	
10	Provides professional supports for teachers in classrooms and out of classes	Mean	2.23	3.09	2.43	2.58
		SD	0.96	0.756	0.753	

Note: SD, standard deviation; significant level = 0.05; *t*-critical value = 1.99; mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60 = disagree, 2.61–3.40 = medium, 3.41–4.20 = agree, and 4.21–5.00 = strongly agree.

values of less than 1.80 showed no problem, 1.81–2.60 as a minor problem, 2.61–3.40 as no response, 3.41–4.20 as a problem, and 4.21–5.00 as a serious problem, respectively. For the case of analysis, strongly agree and agree indicated effective implementation of IL and serious problem and problem on the behalf of challenges faced instructional leaders show a dangerous case to practice their role and medium/no response presents neither positive nor negative agreement on the practice of IL and challenges they face. Similarly, strongly disagree and disagree indicate ineffective implementation of IL and also no problem and minor problem on behalf of the challenges IL show that the challenges were not at risk on their tasks.

Finally, the summary and conclusions were drawn from the findings, and then recommendations were forwarded based on the findings.

3.5. Validity and Reliability of Instruments. To check the validity and reliability of the data gathering tools, the pilot test was conducted at one of Liban Jawi Woreda primary school, which was not found in the sampled schools. The result of the pilot testing was statistically computed by the SPSS computer program. The pilot test was conducted to secure the validity and reliability of the instruments with the objective of checking whether or not the items included in the instrument can enable the researchers to gather relevant information. The internal consistency reliability

estimate was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient of alpha for the questionnaires. The researchers found the coefficient of alpha (α) to be 0.749, which is regarded as high reliability coefficient. Hinton et al. [37] stated that the reliability coefficient is excellent reliability if (0.90 and above), high reliability if (0.70–0.90), moderate reliability if (0.50–0.70), and low reliability if (0.50 and below). The triangulation of data gathering tools was executed with the vice head of WEO by using structured interviews. Also, the instrument return rate was 100% on both the questionnaire and a valid interview.

4. Results of the Study

4.1. The Extent to which Instructional Leaders Practice Their Leadership Role in Their Daily School Activities. As shown in Table 1, the respondents were asked about the extent to which instructional leaders practice their leadership role in their daily school activities. Based on this, teachers, principals, and vice principals responded with different means which shows the different magnitude of their views on the issue. Accordingly, instructional leaders perform well in evaluating teaching learning activities with teachers with a mean of 3.47, playing important roles to make the schools' environment clean, comfortable, and safe for learning with a mean of 3.40, and facilitating conditions for students to get adequate educational materials and services with a mean of 3.04. On the other side, instructional leaders perform low on

TABLE 2: Respondents view on challenges that are not related to instructional leaders themselves.

No.	Item description: school principal as an instructional leader is challenging with	Response	Respondents			Total mean score
			Teachers (n = 114)	Principals (n = 7)	Vice principals (n = 6)	
1	Too much administrative works and external responsibilities (very high workload)	Mean	2.44	2.86	2.83	2.48
		SD	0.79	0.69	0.75	
2	Absence of adequate support in part of stakeholders (student, teachers, PTA, and KETB) on school affairs	Mean	2.77	2.14	2.50	2.47
		SD	0.79	1.06	0.54	
3	Lack of important and adequate professional support from higher bodies (WEO and ZEO)	Mean	3.02	2.86	3.17	3.02
		SD	0.95	0.69	0.40	
4	Shortage of qualified and competent teachers	Mean	3.07	3.14	2.83	3.06
		SD	0.77	0.90	1.16	
5	Lack of sufficient time	Mean	2.46	2.43	2.17	2.44
		SD	0.92	0.97	0.75	
6	Lack of enough provision of financial and material resources	Mean	3.07	3.29	2.67	3.06
		SD	0.83	0.95	0.81	

Note: SD, standard deviation; significant level=0.05; *t*-critical value=1.99; mean scores: 1.00–1.80=no problem, 1.81–2.60=minor problem, 2.61–3.40=undecided, 3.41–4.20=problem, and 4.21–5.00=serious problem.

item 1 (define a vision, mission, and goals of the school in clear and concrete words with a mean of 2.37), item 2 (discusses with teachers, students, and parents on the issue related to vision, mission, and goals of the school with a mean of 2.58), item 5 (discusses with students themselves, teachers and parents to enhance the student's academic achievement with a mean of 2.53), item 6 (ensure the presence of appropriate use of instructional time with a mean of 2.35), item 7 (facilitate the provision of on-job training, workshops, and seminars for teachers to promote their professional development with a mean of 2.43), item 9 (promote active participation of stakeholders in managing the school with a mean of 2.54), and item 10 (provides professional supports for teachers in classrooms and out of classes with a mean of 2.58). This indicated that instructional leaders were performing their instructional leadership role with low performance.

In supporting this, the reflection of the WEO vice head through interview depicted that majority of instructional leaders did not regularly define the vision, mission, and goals of their school and did not communicate it with the school community. The Woreda Vice Head of Education Office also forwarded the following:

Principals as instructional leaders simply write the school vision, mission, and goals of their school on paper when writing the school plan, but did not communicate with the school community on how to practice it on the ground. They were low in discussing with students themselves, teachers and parents to enhance the student's academic achievement and also, they expected to make conducive learning environment for students but still, they inefficiently work to improve the learning environment.

Generally, the compiled result indicates that instructional leaders did not well define and communicate the vision, mission, and goals of their schools. As a result, the schools inefficiently work to improve teachers' profession and had not got enough support in improving the school environment. Thus, this might reduce the effectiveness of students' and teachers' initiation, as well as the school's goal achievement.

4.2. Challenges that Hinder Effectiveness of Instructional Leadership Practices/Problems that Are Not Related to Instructional Leaders Themselves. Table 2 shows the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices related to instructional leaders themselves. Accordingly, as shown in the table, instructional leaders were challenged more by a shortage of qualified and competent teachers, a lack of enough provision of financial and material resources, and a lack of important and adequate professional support from higher bodies (WEO and ZEO) with (3.06, 3.06, and 3.02) total mean scores, respectively. On the other hand, instructional leaders were challenged less by too many administrative works and external responsibilities (very high workload), absence of adequate support on part of stakeholders (student, teachers, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and Kebele Education and Training Board (KETB)) on school's affairs, and lack of sufficient time (2.48, 2.47, and 2.44), respectively. On the other hand, the data collected from the interview, the WEO vice head revealed that the majority of instructional leaders did not face significant workload problems, there was a limited contribution of stakeholders in supporting the schools, there was a presence of some gaps on part of WEO and Zonal Education Department (ZED) in providing professional supports for principals in an adequate and timely manner, there was more or less enough number of qualified teachers in primary schools

TABLE 3: Respondents view on problems that related to instructional leaders themselves.

No.	Item description: school principal as an instructional leader is challenging with	Response	Respondents			Total mean score
			Teachers (n = 114)	Principals (n = 7)	Vice principals (n = 6)	
1	Lack of commitment/dedication and interest of work	Mean	3.61	3.20	3.83	3.54
		SD	0.84	0.81	0.40	
2	A sense of willingness to follow transparent and participatory working system	Mean	3.74	3.29	3.83	3.62
		SD	0.83	0.48	0.40	
3	Lack of sufficient knowledge in education management areas	Mean	3.54	3.44	3.50	3.49
		SD	0.88	0.69	1.04	
4	Lack of social skills to work with others	Mean	3.54	3.34	3.83	3.57
		SD	0.90	0.37	0.75	
5	Unwillingness to accept opinions of others/lead only by one's opinions	Mean	3.56	3.71	3.83	3.70
		SD	0.92	0.48	0.75	

Note: SD, standard deviation; significant level = 0.05; t -critical value = 1.99; mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = no problem, 1.81–2.60 = minor problem, 2.61–3.40 = undecided, 3.41–4.20 = problem, and 4.21–5.00 = serious problem.

of the Woreda, and the principals encountered a minor (insignificant) problem in accomplishing their school leadership tasks due to shortage of time.

Therefore, from the results of the mean scores and the data obtained from the interview, one can conclude that instructional leaders were challenged more due to a shortage of qualified and competent teachers, lack of enough provision of financial and material resources, and lack of important and adequate professional support from higher bodies (WEO and ZEO) which are beyond themselves to control and not related to instructional leaders' inability or commitment. But they were challenged less with too many administrative works and external responsibilities (very high workload), absence of adequate support on part of stakeholders (student, teachers, PTA, and KETB) on school's affairs, and lack of sufficient time on performing their leadership role in the school.

4.3. Challenges that Hinder Effectiveness of Instructional Leadership Practices/Challenges Related to Instructional Leaders Themselves. Table 3 represents the responses of teachers, vice principals, and principals, whereby they were asked to rate the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices, i.e., problems related to the principals themselves.

In line with this, as shown in the above table, all challenges that hinder the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices, i.e., problems related to the principals themselves, the respondents rated as a "problem". That is, item 1 (lack of commitment/dedication and interest in work with a mean of 3.54), item 2 (a sense of willingness to follow a transparent and participatory working system with a mean of 3.62), item 3 (lack of sufficient knowledge in education management areas with a mean of 3.49), item 4 (lack of social skills to work with others with a mean of 3.57), and item 5 (unwillingness to accept opinions of others/lead only by one's opinions with a mean of 3.70) were rated as a problem with mean values ranging between 3.41 and 4.20. This indicates that instructional leaders were challenged more with challenges that hinder the effectiveness of their practices which are related to themselves.

On the other hand, the data collected from the interview, with the WEO vice head revealed that the majority of instructional leaders had faced a lack of interest in work. As vice head of WEO indicates during an interview that:

They more focus on their benefit and did not more focus on changing their school with commitment, i.e., they work on this position more for getting its good salary than teachers. The other teachers hadn't interested and did not fulfil the standard to come to this position when notified to invite the position.

In addition, there was an insufficient contribution of principals in encouraging participation of the stakeholders like parents and community members in issues of their schools. Moreover, during interviews, the vice head of WEO also explained that the instructional leaders had not reasonably good relationships with their colleagues and other stakeholders. Finally, the vice head of WEO also expressed that the principals were not fully ready to accept the ideas and bits of advice of others, which, in turn, led to a lack of acceptance of the instructional leaders by the teachers and others.

Therefore, from the results of the mean scores and the data obtained from the interview, one can conclude that instructional leaders face problems in having commitment and interest in work, willingness to follow a transparent and participatory working system, knowledge in education management areas, social skills to work with others, and accept opinions of others.

This implies that the primary school instructional leaders were more challenged with the challenges regarding themselves than that challenges that are not related to instructional leaders themselves.

4.4. The Extent to which Instructional Leaders Take Measures to Overcome the Challenges that Hinder Instructional Leadership Activities. As shown in Table 4, the respondents were found under question in providing job training workshops and seminars for principals by higher bodies, i.e., school supervisors, WEO, ZED, Regional Education Bureau (REO), or MOE with total mean scores of 3.13 and assigning senior and capable

TABLE 4: Respondents view on instructional leaders measures to overcome the challenges that hinder instructional leadership activities.

No.	Item description: school principal as an instructional leader takes a measure like	Response	Respondents			Total mean score
			Teachers (n = 114)	Principals (n = 7)	Vice principals (n = 6)	
1	Aware key stakeholders/teachers, students, parents, and community members/on issues of schools	Mean	2.11	2.21	2.33	2.15
		SD	1.17	0.48	0.41	
2	Providing a job trainings workshops and seminars for principals/by the school and higher bodies	Mean	2.88	3.57	3.17	3.13
		SD	1.19	0.97	0.75	
3	Striving to develop their leadership competency	Mean	2.27	2.63	2.20	2.35
		SD	1.08	0.54	0.63	
4	Assigning senior and capable teachers in different administrative positions in school	Mean	2.56	2.71	2.83	2.63
		SD	1.03	1.11	1.16	
5	Confronting and resolving conflicts among/between principals, teachers, and students in a timely manner	Mean	2.21	2.69	2.30	2.25
		SD	0.96	0.48	0.54	

Note: SD, standard deviation; significant level = 0.05; *t*-critical value = 1.99; mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60 = disagree, 2.61–3.40 = undecided, 3.41–4.20 = agree, and 4.21–5.00 = strongly agree.

teachers in different administrative positions in school with total mean scores of 2.63 to decide whether instructional leaders and other stakeholders take a measure to overcome the problems in which principals faced during carrying out their leadership activities as rated mean between 2.61 and 3.40, which shows “undecided.”

On the other hand, regarding measures that had been taken by the principals themselves, the schools and other concerned bodies in order to overcome the problems which the principals faced in carrying out their leadership activities respondents rated a “disagree.” That is, item 1 (aware key stakeholders/teachers, students, parents, and community members/on issues of schools with a mean of 2.15), item 3 (the principals themselves strive to develop their leadership competency with total mean scores of 2.35), and item 5 (confront and resolve conflicts among/between principals, teachers, and students in promptly total mean scores of 2.25) rated it as a “disagree,” which show low performance with a mean value ranging between 1.81 and 2.60.

The data obtained from the vice head of WEO also revealed that the instructional leaders worked less to aware parents and community members on issues of the schools, their office and ZED designed and provided some training to overcome the skill gap problem of the principals, the personal efforts exerted to enhance their own school leadership ability were not satisfactory, and the instructional leaders were not as such interested to assign senior teachers in administrative position because of fear of challenges from the teachers and some of the sample schools encountered serious problems due to presence of conflicts between teachers and the school heads. This respondent further expressed that their offices sometime intervened, by sending experts and supervisors to the school to handle the conflicts among teachers and principals.

5. Discussion of the Finding

Based on the analysis of data, regarding the practice of instructional leadership in primary schools of Liban Jawi

Woreda, the study identified the findings that more respondents disagreed with instructional leaders in defining and communicating the vision, mission, and goals of their school with the mean scores of 2.37 and 2.58, respectively. According to the data analysis method, the mean scores of 2.37 and 2.56 show low performance regarding the practice of instructional leadership in the primary schools of the Woreda. Hence, the finding is in agreement with Jenkins [38] who stated that effective instructional leaders continually communicate the vision, mission, and goals of their schools to teachers, students, and parents. The data obtained from majority of respondents with a total mean of 2.43 and of vice head of WEO indicated that the instructional leaders worked less in facilitating provision of on-job training, workshops, and seminars for teachers to promote their professional development.

On the other hand, the majority of respondents agreed in instructional leaders play important roles to make the school environment clean, comfortable, and safe for learning with a total mean score of 3.40. This mean score shows that instructional leaders showed good performance regarding playing a significant role to make the schools clean, comfortable, and safe for students learning.

Concerning challenges encountered to undertake instructional leadership activities, the study revealed that instructional leaders were challenged with both challenges that related to instructional leaders themselves and challenges that were not emanate from instructional leaders. Accordingly, the majority of respondents rated as minor problems with a total mean (2.48, 2.47, and 2.44) regarding challenges that are not related to principles, i.e., too much administrative work and external responsibilities (very high workload), absence of adequate support in part of stakeholders (student, teachers, PTA, and KETB) on schools affairs, and lack of sufficient time, respectively. Those mean scores of 2.48, 2.47, and 2.44 show that instructional leaders were challenged less by those challenges that are not emanated from principals themselves. In contrast, the majority of respondents rated challenges that emanate from

the principals themselves with a mean ranging from 3.39 to 3.70. Those mean scores and response of the WEO vice head show a danger to practicing leadership roles in the school, i.e., lack of commitment and willingness to follow a transparent and participatory working system, lack of sufficient knowledge in education management, social skills to work with others, and unwillingness to accept the opinion of others as the challenges, which emanate from the principals themselves with mean ranging from 3.39 to 3.70. Participants in the interview also depicted the existence of several challenges, including capacity problems. Related studies in the area also assure the existence of similar things throughout the region. Recently, a study done by Bekele [39] and Tadesse [40] around the study area shows that instructional leaders were assigned without having educational planning and management skills. Also, a study done by Husien [13] identified a selection of instructional leaders in the Ethiopian context was dependent on political affiliation and membership.

Regarding efforts in which the instructional leaders take measures to overcome the challenges, they faced the majority of respondents disagree with aware their key stakeholders about the school's issue, confronting and resolving conflicts among principals, teachers, and students promptly, and striving to develop their leadership competency with mean scores of 2.15, 2.25, and 2.35. Those mean scores show that instructional leaders strived fewer efforts to overcome the challenges they faced during performing their leadership activities. Besides, instructional leaders were not provided efficiently with short-term training, workshop, and seminars about school leadership, by their schools and top bodies, which were rated by many respondents with a mean of 3.13. This implies that the efforts, which the instructional leaders exerted to aware their school stakeholders on the school's problem, were not satisfactory. These, in turn, hinder the leadership effectiveness of the principals.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was an empirical analysis that focuses on the practices and challenges of instructional leadership in Liban Jawi Woreda of the West Shoa Zone. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn, i.e., even though there were a few positive aspects of the practice of instructional leadership in the study, one can safely say that instructional leadership activities were challenged by a series of challenges. Moreover, instructional leaders did not define and communicate the vision, mission, and goals of their schools in the primary schools of Liban Jawi Woreda due to a lack of educational leadership knowledge. Hence, it is difficult to achieve school-wide academic growth and improvement for students without well communicating the mission, vision, and goals of the school in a manner indicated by educational leaders as responding to the needs of students, teachers, and parents. On the other hand, effective implementation of instructional leadership activities in Liban Jawi primary schools was highly challenged by a lack of sufficient knowledge in educational leadership, lack of commitment and willingness to follow the transparent and

participatory working system, and unwillingness to accept the opinion of others as the challenges, which emanate from the principals themselves. From this, it is possible to conclude that the effectiveness of instructional leaders' leadership was severely affected because of the problems that were related to the principals themselves. Even though challenges highly affected their leadership role in teaching learning activities, one can say that instructional leaders have a gap in taking a measure to overcome those problems. They lacked the willingness to apply a participatory and transparent leadership approaches, as well as they were not found in a position to accept the opinions and ideas of others. Moreover, all of the instructional leaders did not have educational leadership background, i.e., lacking adequate knowledge, skill, and experience in areas of school leadership, which perhaps was the most influential factor that hinders the effectiveness of the instructional leaders' school leadership roles.

Depending on the findings of research results and organized data, the following points were recommended:

- (i) Continuous capacity development programs, as well as professional development opportunities, should be organized by the WEO, ZED, REO, and MOE for all the existing instructional leaders to mitigate capacity- and awareness-related challenges and help them understand the detailed educational roles expected of leaders in modern schools.
- (ii) It is also recommendable that all stakeholders such as the local education office, parents, and the local political party that govern the area should help schools with the necessary financial support, facilities, and material resources. It also seems wise to help schools develop their internal income generation schemes in the long run, so that they rely on themselves to overcome the shortage of materials, equipment, and facilities.
- (iii) Experts and policymakers should create laws intended to address the instructional leadership issue and balance principals' role in educational settings. Besides, universities and training programs had better enable the instructional leaders to lead and manage schools.
- (iv) Moreover, the principals themselves need to refer to different written materials that could improve their knowledge and skills in areas of school leadership.

Data Availability

The data that supported the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author (lucho.begi2015@gmail.com) upon request.

Additional Points

Limitations. This study was focused on only the perspectives of principal instructional leaders, while overlooking the viewpoints of other stakeholders, such as teachers, students, or parents. The study area was also delimited to Liban Jawi Woreda. The results of the study may not be representative

of primary schools in other locations or setting. The design of the present study is descriptive survey design, which only provides a snapshot of the practices and challenges faced at one point in time and may not account for changes over a longer period. Therefore, further research is needed, including additional stakeholders of instructional leadership, which are related to students learning with different instructional qualities.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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