

Leadership Styles of School Principals and Their Influence on Teacher Occupational Satisfaction



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Abstract: *This study investigates the influence of school principals' leadership styles on teachers' occupational satisfaction across primary, middle, high, and higher secondary schools in District Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 745 teachers using a structured questionnaire. The analysis reveals that transformational leadership is the most prevalent style among school principals (64%), followed by transactional (22%) and participative (14%) styles. Transformational leadership—characterized by motivation, vision, innovation, and individualized support—was significantly associated with higher levels of teacher job satisfaction. Transactional leadership, while effective in ensuring order and discipline, showed only moderate links to teacher engagement. Participative leadership, though least observed, demonstrated positive associations with teacher involvement and morale. The study also found a gender imbalance among teachers, with female educators representing 62% of the sample. These findings underscore the critical role of leadership in shaping a supportive school climate and enhancing teacher motivation and retention. The study recommends that educational policymakers and school administrators invest in leadership development programs that promote transformational and participative leadership approaches to improve teacher well-being and institutional performance.*

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Teacher Job Satisfaction, School Principals, Educational Leadership, Occupational Satisfaction, Participative Leadership, District Nowshera.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Examining how school principals' leadership styles affect teachers' occupational satisfaction is vital in the education sector. A principal's leadership effectiveness not only influences teachers' job fulfillment but also plays a key role in shaping the school environment. This study seeks to explore the impact of various leadership styles employed by principals on teachers' occupational satisfaction, evaluate their role in

creating a supportive work atmosphere, and identify essential leadership behaviors that contribute to professional well-being.

The research begins by reviewing existing literature on leadership styles, with a particular focus on transformational leadership and its practical application in educational settings. It then explores leadership within the school context, emphasizing the strong connection between principals' leadership styles and

teachers' experiences, motivation, and job performance. Lastly, the study presents a detailed discussion of relevant research findings, underscoring the importance of leadership in improving teacher satisfaction and enhancing overall school effectiveness.

1.1 Transformational Leadership in Education

Transformational leadership is recognized as one of the most impactful leadership models in the educational sector, particularly in how school principals' leadership styles influence teachers' occupational satisfaction and overall professional experience. In the educational context, research suggests that transformational leadership significantly influences teachers' commitment and their overall attitude toward their profession. First introduced by Bass (1985), transformational leadership is recognized as one of the most prominent and widely accepted theories among various inspirational leadership models, particularly in understanding how school principals' leadership styles impact teachers' occupational satisfaction.

1.2 Key Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Bass and Avolio (1993) identified four key dimensions of transformational leadership: (a) charisma or idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. These elements are based on the idea that transformational leadership is a more impactful and effective leadership style compared to transactional leadership, particularly in the way school principals influence teachers' occupational satisfaction and overall professional engagement.

1.3 Idealized Influence and Leadership Effectiveness

Avolio and Yammarino (2013) describe idealized influence as behavioral charisma, emphasizing its role in leadership effectiveness. In this framework, school principals seek to earn teachers' trust, loyalty, admiration, and respect by demonstrating a compelling vision and leading by example. This dimension of idealized

influence requires principals to act with confidence and optimism, take shared risks in implementing educational strategies, and uphold strong ethical values, ultimately fostering a positive work environment that enhances teachers' occupational satisfaction.

Principals who exhibit idealized influence foster trust and optimism among teachers, enhancing their occupational satisfaction and overall commitment to the school's vision. A transformational leader fosters motivation and introduces innovative ideas to inspire the teaching staff, enhancing their engagement and job satisfaction. By establishing a shared vision, setting high expectations, and fostering a culture that aligns with teachers' professional aspirations, principals create a sense of purpose in their work.

1.4 Inspirational Motivation and Professional Growth

Avolio (2014) emphasizes that by guiding teachers in goal-setting, principals cultivate an environment that is both meaningful and stimulating, ultimately enhancing teachers' occupational satisfaction. Cultivating leadership attitudes is essential for fostering support for students and the entire school community (Gibson, Dollarhide, Conley, & Lowe, 2018).

1.5 Encouraging Innovation and Intellectual Stimulation

Principals who exhibit transformational leadership foster a supportive environment where teachers feel encouraged to embrace innovation and creativity. By promoting a culture free from fear of criticism or punishment, they empower teachers to critically assess traditional methods and explore new instructional approaches (Alzoraiki et al., 2018).

1.6 Individualized Consideration and Teacher Support

According to Bass and Avolio (1993). The final domain identified by Bass and Avolio (1993) is individualized consideration, in which principals recognize and support teachers as unique individuals rather than just employees. They strategically assign teachers to positions and grade levels that align with their skills,

talents, and expertise. Active listening plays a crucial role in this domain, as addressing individual needs and concerns helps build self-confidence. Within the transformational leadership framework, principals are responsible for acknowledging teachers' achievements, initiative, and progress toward their full potential through meaningful praise and encouragement (Alzoraiki et al., 2018).

1.7 Fostering Collaboration and Organizational Success

By fostering a culture of collaboration, principals and teachers work together toward the shared goal of student success while striving to achieve the organization's objectives (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016). For leadership to be truly transformational, the relationship between leaders and followers should go beyond mere promises of external rewards. Instead, it should emphasize relationship building, character development, and the creation of a supportive and empowering environment (Yaslioglu & SelenayErden, 2018).

1.8 Transformational Leadership and School Improvement

According to Northouse (1997), transformational leadership is a process that brings about change and growth in both teachers and the school district as a whole. It emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire individuals to seek transformation, improvement, and progress, ultimately empowering followers to develop into leaders themselves (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016).

1.9 Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership by explaining that transactional leadership is based on exchanges of value, whereas transformational leadership focuses on fostering engagement and a shared commitment to a higher purpose among followers. Transformational leaders play a crucial role in using strategic communication to enhance organizational performance and drive meaningful change. A transformational leader

enhances organizational performance by driving positive change and fostering continuous growth and development among members. Transformational leaders prioritize empowering organizational members, emphasizing growth and development throughout the process rather than solely focusing on the final outcome.

1.10 Prioritizing Teacher Satisfaction for Student Success

When principals prioritize employee job satisfaction, teachers, in turn, concentrate on achieving successful student outcomes. Sinek (2017) emphasizes that principals who cultivate a culture free from fear create an environment that supports and enhances student success.

1.11 Teachers' Occupational Perception and Job Satisfaction

The concept of teachers' occupational perception primarily encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the teaching profession. Intrinsic factors pertain to elements like workplace autonomy and other inherent characteristics of teaching (Pearson, 1995). Teachers' occupational perception includes both intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic factors involve aspects such as professional prestige, status, personal growth, and self-esteem, while extrinsic factors relate to the physical work environment and benefits like salary. Both dimensions contribute to the overall perception of teaching as a profession. Regarding job satisfaction, it is suggested that when teachers view their profession as one that offers high status, opportunities for promotion, self-development, and personal growth, their overall job satisfaction is likely to increase.

1.12 Factors Influencing Teachers' Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

In examining the factors influencing teachers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, Sergiovanni identified 'satisfiers' as achievement, recognition, and responsibility, while 'dissatisfiers' included interpersonal relationships with colleagues and subordinates, technical supervision, school policies, and personal life (p. 75-76). Additionally, a study investigating the impact of leadership behavior,

consideration, and initiating structure found that occupational status played a key role in predicting job satisfaction among research and development workers. The impact of teachers' perceived autonomy in the classroom was also analyzed and found to have a positive correlation with job satisfaction. Teacher empowerment is another important aspect of how teachers perceive their profession. It encompasses professional growth, autonomy, self-efficacy, and impact—referring to teachers' beliefs in their ability to influence school life. Additionally, it includes professional respect and participation in decision-making processes that directly affect their work.

1.13 Role of Leadership and Decision-Making in Teacher Satisfaction

A positive relationship was found between principals' instructional leadership behaviors—those directly related to teaching and learning—and professional involvement. Professional involvement was defined as the extent to which teachers are dedicated to their work, eager to learn from one another, and committed to ongoing professional development (p. 335).

It was found that teachers derived the most satisfaction from intrinsic aspects of their job, such as self-growth, mastery of professional skills, and a supportive work environment (p. 375). These findings suggest that teachers highly value the professional dimensions of their occupation. Most researchers investigating teacher job satisfaction focus on the impact of factors such as principals' leadership styles and decision-making strategies on teachers' overall contentment and the likelihood of burnout in the profession.

1.14 Impact of Leadership and Decision-Making on Teacher Satisfaction

The present study aimed to explore, among other factors, the impact of teachers' occupational perceptions on their job satisfaction. It is hypothesized that teachers' perceptions of their profession directly influence their satisfaction while also being shaped by principals' leadership style and decision-making strategies. Principals who exhibit transformational leadership—such as addressing teachers' individual needs,

fostering intellectual stimulation and challenges, elevating expectations, and motivating teachers to invest extra effort—are expected to enhance teachers' perception of their profession as more fulfilling and central to their lives. Similarly, principals' decision-making style plays a role in this relationship. Teachers who are actively involved in school decision-making processes tend to feel more engaged and committed to their work. Therefore, this study examines the direct and indirect effects of principals' leadership style and decision-making approach on teachers' job satisfaction. It is expected that teacher satisfaction will be influenced more by transformational leadership than by a participative decision-making style. Previous research suggests that teacher burnout is closely linked to "consideration behaviors"—a key aspect of transformational leadership that involves addressing the needs and expectations of teachers—rather than to initiating-structure behaviors, which prioritize task-oriented activities with less emphasis on individual concerns.

Research Questions:

1. What are the predominant leadership styles exhibited by school principals in primary to higher secondary schools in District Nowshera?
2. How do different leadership styles of school principals affect teachers' occupational satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teacher engagement and morale across various school levels?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify and categorize the leadership styles commonly practiced by school principals in District Nowshera schools.
2. To examine the influence of transformational, transactional, and participative leadership styles on teachers' occupational satisfaction.
3. To assess the impact of principals' leadership styles on teacher involvement, motivation, and overall

well-being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' occupational satisfaction. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among teachers from primary, middle, high, and higher secondary schools in District Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

2.2 Participants

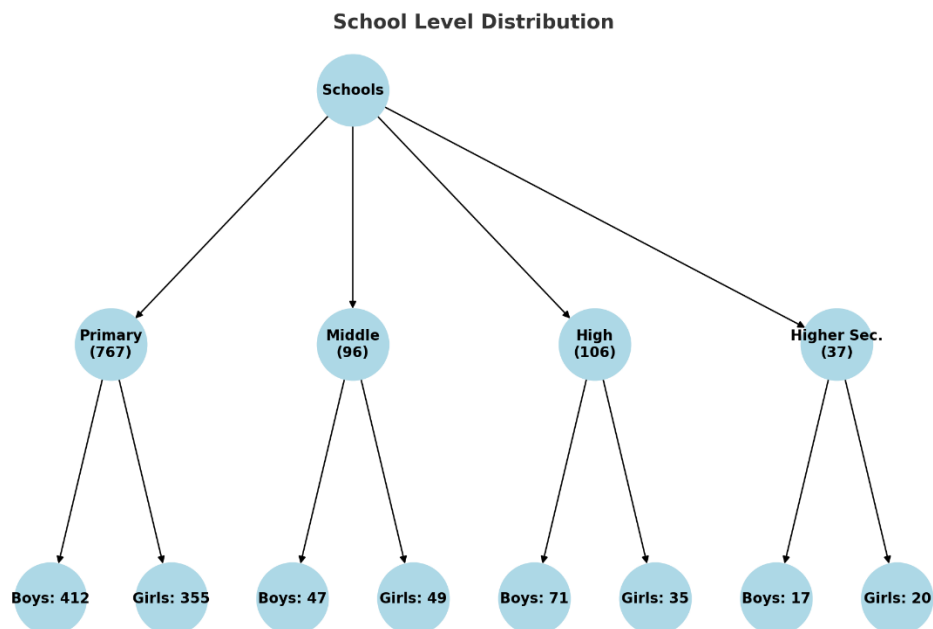
The study included teachers from District Nowshera, covering all educational levels from primary to higher secondary schools. A total of 930 teachers were invited to participate, and 745

completed and returned usable questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 80%.

2.3 School-Level Distribution

Participants were drawn from various school levels, as follows:

Level of School	Boys' Schools	Girls' Schools	Total Schools
Primary	412	355	767
Middle	47	49	96
High	71	35	106
Higher Secondary	17	20	37



2.4 Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure representation across different school levels and gender categories. Schools were selected from urban, suburban, and rural areas to ensure diversity in educational settings. The sample aimed to reflect the actual teacher population in District Nowshera.

2.5 Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which measured:

1. Principals' Leadership Styles (e.g., transformational, transactional, and participative leadership)
2. Teachers' Occupational Satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction factors)

The questionnaire was distributed among primary, middle, high, and higher secondary school teachers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, ensuring that teachers could provide honest and unbiased responses.

3. RESULTS

The table No 3.1 presents an overview of the distribution of schools by level, along with the percentage of total schools and teacher response rates in District Nowshera.

Primary Schools: Primary schools constitute the largest proportion, with 767 schools, representing 72.8% of the total schools. Despite this large number, the teacher response rate from primary schools was 54%, indicating that slightly more than half of the surveyed teachers were from this category. Given that primary schools form the foundation of education, this high percentage aligns with the typical structure of educational institutions, where primary education facilities outnumber higher-level schools.

Middle Schools: Middle schools account for 96 schools, making up 9.1% of the total. The teacher response rate from middle schools was 18%, showing that middle school teachers had a relatively higher response proportion compared to their total school count. This may suggest a greater willingness among middle school teachers to participate in surveys or an increased awareness of leadership influence at this stage of education.

High Schools: The number of high schools in the district is 106, comprising 10.1% of the total

schools. The response rate from high school teachers was 20%, indicating a higher engagement of high school teachers in this study. High school educators often experience more structured leadership and administrative involvement, which could explain their increased participation in research on leadership styles and occupational satisfaction.

Higher Secondary Schools: Higher secondary schools are the least numerous, with 37 schools, making up 3.5% of the total. The teacher response rate from these institutions was 8%, which, although lower compared to other levels, remains proportionate to the relatively smaller number of higher secondary schools in the district. The limited representation of higher secondary schools may be attributed to the fact that they cater to a smaller student population and require more specialized teaching staff.

Overall, the table highlights the dominance of primary schools in the district and the varying teacher response rates across different school levels. The data suggests that while the majority of schools are at the primary level, high school and middle school teachers showed relatively higher engagement in the study. This distribution provides essential context for analyzing the influence of leadership styles on teacher occupational satisfaction across different educational levels.

Table No. 3.1

School Level	Total Schools	% of Total Schools	Teacher Responses (%)
Primary	767	72.8%	54%
Middle	96	9.1%	18%
High	106	10.1%	20%
Higher Secondary	37	3.5%	8%

Table No. 3.1 School Level, Total Schools, % of Total Schools, Teacher Responses (%)

The gender distribution of teachers in District Nowshera shows a significant female majority. Male teachers total 283 (38%), indicating a lower representation, possibly due to career preferences and societal norms. Female teachers

account for 462 (62%), reflecting the global trend of women dominating the teaching profession, especially at primary and middle school levels. This imbalance highlights the need to explore factors such as leadership styles and job satisfaction, which may vary based on gender representation in schools as shown in table 3.2.

Table No. 3.2

Gender	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Male	283	38%
Female	462	62%

Table No. 3.2 Demographic Data

The data on leadership styles observed among school principals in District Nowshera highlights the dominance of transformational leadership, identified by 64% of teachers. This style, characterized by motivation, professional development, and fostering innovation, is linked to higher teacher satisfaction and engagement.

Transactional leadership was recognized by 22% of teachers, emphasizing structured tasks, rewards, and discipline. While effective in maintaining order, it may not significantly

enhance teachers' long-term motivation or job satisfaction.

Participative leadership was the least observed, identified by 14% of teachers. This style encourages teacher involvement in decision-making, promoting collaboration and commitment. However, its lower percentage suggests limited implementation in schools.

The dominance of transformational leadership suggests that most principals adopt strategies that inspire and empower teachers, positively influencing their occupational satisfaction.

Table No. 3.3

Leadership Style	Percentage of Teachers Identifying This Style
Transformational	64%
Transactional	22%
Participative	14%

Table No. 3.3 Leadership Style Percentage of Teachers Identifying This Style

Figure 3.1: Total School & Teachers Responses by School Level

The bar chart illustrates the distribution of total schools and teacher responses across different school levels in District Nowshera. Primary schools constitute the largest category, with 767 schools, making up 72.8% of the total, while 54% of teacher responses come from this level. Middle schools account for 96 schools, representing 9.1% of the total, with 18% of teacher responses. High schools comprise 106 schools, contributing to 10.1% of the total, while 20% of teacher responses come from this category. Higher secondary schools are the least in number, with only 37 schools (3.5%), and they account for 8% of teacher responses. The chart highlights the predominance of primary schools in the district, yet the teacher response

rate is more evenly distributed, indicating higher engagement at the middle and high school levels relative to their proportion.

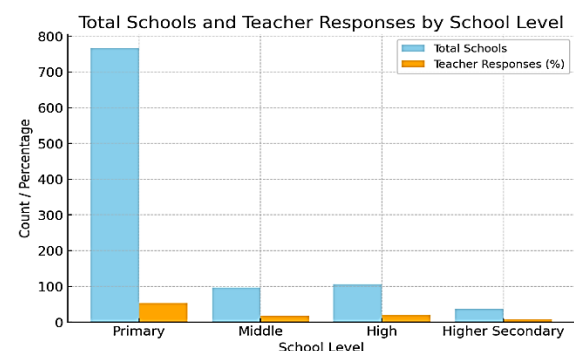


Figure 3.2: Gender Distribution of Teachers

The Figure. No 3.2 represents the gender distribution of teachers in District Nowshera. It indicates that female teachers significantly outnumber their male counterparts. A total of 462 female teachers (62%) are represented by the taller pink bar, whereas 283 male teachers (38%) are shown by the shorter blue bar. This

disparity suggests a higher participation of women in the teaching profession within the district. The visual distinction highlights the gender imbalance, emphasizing the dominance of female educators in the sampled schools.

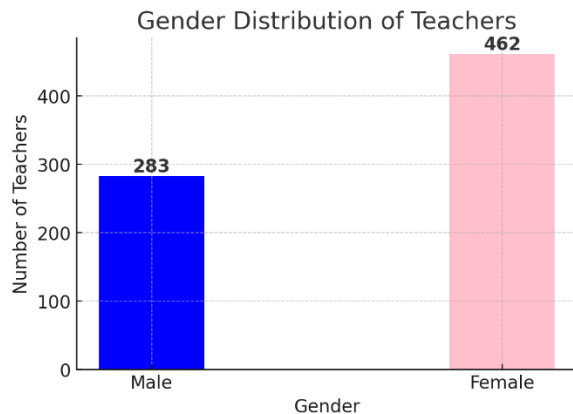
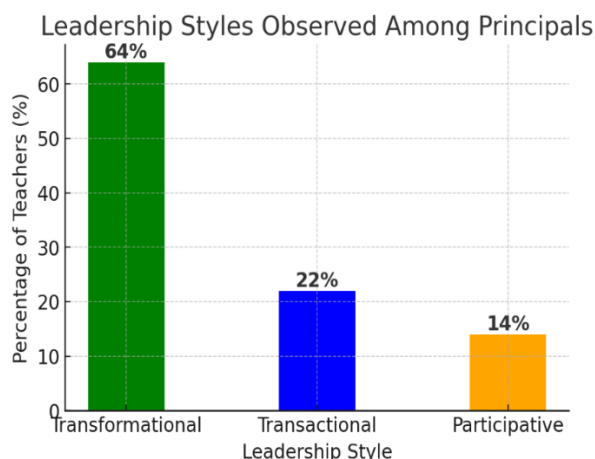


Figure. 3.3: Leadership Style Observed among Principals

The Figure. No 3.3 illustrates the distribution of leadership styles observed among school principals based on teacher responses. Transformational leadership is the most commonly identified style, with 64% of teachers recognizing it in their principals. This suggests that most school leaders emphasize motivation, vision, and innovation. Transactional leadership, characterized by structured management and reward-based performance, is reported by 22% of teachers. Lastly, participative leadership, which involves shared decision-making and collaboration, is the least observed, with only 14% of teachers identifying this style. The dominance of transformational leadership highlights its significance in educational settings.



4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between school leadership styles and teacher occupational satisfaction. The data indicates that the majority of surveyed teachers were from primary schools (72.8%), followed by high schools (10.1%), middle schools (9.1%), and higher secondary schools (3.5%). Additionally, the gender distribution revealed a predominance of female teachers (62%) compared to male teachers (38%). These trends are consistent with broader educational workforce patterns, where female teachers often constitute a significant proportion of the teaching profession, particularly at the primary and elementary levels (26,27).

The study revealed that transformational leadership was the most commonly identified leadership style among school principals, with 64% of teachers recognizing it as their principal's predominant approach. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that transformational leadership positively influences teacher job satisfaction (28). A meta-analysis conducted in Asian educational settings found that transformational leadership significantly enhances teacher performance, including job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy (29).

Teachers under transformational leadership reported higher levels of job satisfaction. This supports the notion that transformational leaders, through individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, foster a supportive environment that enhances teacher morale (30). Conversely, transactional leadership (identified by 22% of teachers) was associated with moderate satisfaction levels, emphasizing task completion and contingent rewards over personal development. Participative leadership (14%) also contributed positively to teacher engagement, highlighting the benefits of involving teachers in decision-making processes.

FINDINGS

The findings suggest that educational policymakers should prioritize leadership development programs that cultivate

transformational leadership skills among principals. Emphasizing teacher empowerment, professional growth opportunities, and participative decision-making can lead to improved job satisfaction and retention rates. A study conducted in Pakistan demonstrated that transformational leadership practices significantly affect teacher job satisfaction and retention, underscoring the importance of adopting such approaches in educational settings.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on school leadership and teacher job satisfaction, reinforcing the pivotal role of transformational leadership in fostering a positive teaching environment. Future research should explore how contextual factors, such as school infrastructure, teacher workload, and student behavior, interact with leadership styles to further influence teacher satisfaction and retention.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant impact of school principals' leadership styles on teacher occupational satisfaction. The findings reveal that transformational leadership is the most prevalent among principals, with 64% of teachers identifying this style. This leadership approach, characterized by motivation, vision, and teacher empowerment, contributes positively to job satisfaction and retention. Transactional leadership (22%) and participative leadership (14%) were also observed, but with comparatively lower influence on teacher engagement.

The study also highlights the gender imbalance in the teaching profession in District Nowshera, where female teachers (62%) outnumber male teachers (38%). Additionally, the distribution of schools shows that primary schools dominate the district, yet higher engagement was noted among middle and high school teachers.

Given the critical role of transformational leadership in fostering a positive teaching environment, policymakers should prioritize leadership development programs that cultivate this approach. Encouraging professional growth opportunities, participative decision-making,

and a supportive school culture can enhance teacher satisfaction and retention. Future research should explore how contextual factors, such as infrastructure, workload, and student behavior, interact with leadership styles to further refine strategies for improving teacher motivation and overall school performance.

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