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HEADTEACHERS LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON TEACHER MOTIVATION AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: This study looks at how several leadership styles like transformational, transactional, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire affect secondary school head teachers' performance. 109 head teachers (65 male and 44 female) in District Bhakkar, Pakistan, were surveyed using a quantitative technique and stratified random sampling. According to descriptive statistics, the most common leadership styles were transformational ($M=3.97$) and democratic ($M=4.08$), while autocratic ($M=2.39$) and laissez-faire ($M=2.99$) were the least popular. According to Pearson moment product correlation results, teacher motivation was strongly positively correlated with transformational ($r=0.64$) and democratic ($r=0.57$) leadership, while morale was adversely correlated with autocratic ($r=-0.53$) leadership. The findings of the ANOVA showed that there were substantial variations in school performance amongst leadership styles ($F=5.68$, $p<0.01$), with transformational and democratic methods producing better results. The results of regression analysis showed that democratic ($\beta=0.52$) and transformational ($\beta=0.48$) leadership were important indicators of school success. The results showed that female head teachers tended to be less autocratic and more democratic. Transformational leadership also performed better in larger schools ($\beta=0.63$ vs 0.39). The results discourage autocratic and passive methods and support collaborative, flexible leadership in educational settings. They also suggest professional development programs to improve head teachers' leadership skills. Fostering gender-inclusive leadership practices and incorporating teacher input into leadership evaluations are two examples of policy consequences.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Secondary Education, Head Teacher Performance, Transformational Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Teacher Motivation, School Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

In educational institutions, especially at the secondary level, the quality of teaching as well as the results of students and the sustainability of the institution as a whole are all significantly under the leadership effects. As the primary leader of a school, the head teacher is responsible for the way the mission is determined, the use of resources, providing a good school climate and ensuring that education is successfully administered. Because of this, their leadership style has a big influence on the student engagement, teacher morale, instructional innovation, and administrative functioning (Leith wood et al., 2020; Bush, 2023).

More dynamic, inclusive, and transformative techniques have wholly replaced transactional and bureaucratic paradigms in educational leadership thought in recent decades. These models recognize that inspiring, helping and motivating others towards shared educational goals are important as they are associated with leadership, which extends to power and obedience (Nguyen et al., 2023). In light of the complexity of the schools in twenty-first century as a consequence of globalization, digital transformation, inclusive education requirements, and shifting expectations of society and people, this evolution seems to be particularly relevant (OECD, 2023).

The necessity of responsive and flexible leadership in schools was further highlighted by the COVID-19 epidemic. In extremely uncertain situations, headteachers were expected to handle emergencies, preserve employee morale, apply digital learning techniques, and guarantee learning continuity (Harris & Jones, 2021). As a result, resilience, emotional intelligence, and dispersed leadership are now included in the discussion of leadership styles.

Through the perspective of leadership styles, this study aims to investigate the elements impacting secondary school head teachers' performance. The results are intended to inform educational policy and professional development initiatives for head teachers, both present and prospective, and to provide empirical insights into successful school leadership practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Styles in Educational Contexts

Numerous theoretical frameworks are often used to analyze educational leadership, and each one provides insights into the ways in which head teachers affect school procedures and results. In educational research, transformational, transactional, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles are the most often examined.

Transformational Leadership

The capacity to inspire, encourage, and intellectually challenge followers while providing tailored attention is a hallmark of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It has been demonstrated that this leadership approach increases teacher self-efficacy, encourages creativity, and helps school stakeholders develop a common vision (Leithwood & Sun, 2022). Through indirect mechanisms including improved instructional methods and more teacher cooperation, transformational head teachers have a favorable impact on student success, claim Nguyen et al., (2023). However, contextual factors including school size, socioeconomic environment, and leadership ability frequently affect its performance (Hallinger, 2018).

Transactional Leadership

On the other hand, transactions and dependent incentives are the foundation of transactional leadership. Structure, regulations, and performance indicators are emphasized (Bass, 1985). This strategy can guarantee accountability and order, especially in inflexible or underperforming educational institutions, but it can also result in a compliance-focused culture that stifles originality and self-motivation (Shava & Ndebele, 2022; Bush & Glover, 2014). However, in circumstances like crisis response or policy execution that call for strict management monitoring, transactional leadership is still applicable.

Democratic (Participative) Leadership

Democratic leadership promotes active participation from parents, teachers, and students as well as cooperative decision-making. Stronger trust connections, increased employee job satisfaction, and enhanced institutional commitment are the results of this inclusive strategy (Blase & Blase, 2023; OECD, 2024). Additionally, it is consistent with distributed leadership concepts, which call for the entire team to share decision-making and responsibility.

Democratic leadership, however, might not work as well in schools with a collaborative culture or in emergency situations that call for quick decisions (Ibrahim & Al-Taneiji, 2021).

Autocratic Leadership

Limited teacher autonomy, top-down communication, and centralized control are characteristics of autocratic leadership. In contemporary educational situations, it is typically seen as antiquated and frequently linked to strict hierarchical systems. However, in certain situations, such as when schools are dealing with severe performance or discipline problems, authoritarian approaches could offer temporary stability (Yukl & Gardner, 2022; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). However, low staff morale, reluctance to change, and decreased innovation among educators are often associated with long-term dependence on authoritarian leadership (Rahman et al., 2023).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Employees under laissez-faire leadership have the most liberty with the least amount of direct leader participation. Although it could enable seasoned and self-driven educators, it also runs the danger of causing a lack of focus, inadequate coordination, and inconsistent application of the policy (Wang et al., 2021). According to Zhou et al. (2022), the professionalism and maturity of the teaching staff have a major role in how successful is laissez-faire leadership.

The Impact of Leadership on School Performance

Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction

One of the main factors influencing teacher motivation and work satisfaction is effective leadership. Research indicates that transformational and democratic leadership styles improve teachers' possibilities for professional advancement, recognition, and psychological safety (Nguyen et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2023). These elements are essential for keeping brilliant teachers on staff and lowering burnout. In contrast, schools with apathetic or autocratic leadership frequently report greater turnover rates and low morale (OECD, 2023).

Student Achievement

It is often known that leadership has an indirect impact on student success. Setting goals, training staff, and restructuring the organization are the three main ways that school leaders impact student learning, according Leithwood et al., (2022). Academic performance is typically greater in schools with strong, visionary leadership, especially when such leadership promotes inclusive pedagogies, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction (Robinson & Grey, 2024).

School Climate

Leadership is directly related to school climate, which includes relationships, teaching and learning, safety, and the institutional setting. A good, trust-based culture that encourages learning and creativity is fostered by collaborative leadership. In contrast, the school system's accountability and coherence may be compromised by authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership (Chin & Hung, 2023; OECD, 2024).

Research Questions

1. What effects do the various leadership philosophies transformational, transactional, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire have on secondary school teachers' motivation and work satisfaction?
2. How much do leadership styles impact the efficacy of schools and the academic achievement of students?
3. How do educators and administrators see each leadership style's advantages and disadvantages in running secondary schools?

Research Objectives

1. To determine how common transformational, transactional, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles are among head teachers of secondary schools.
2. To assess how each leadership style affects student success, teacher effectiveness, and school atmosphere.
3. To provide a framework for adaptable leadership tactics that integrates each style's best features for enhancing schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to collect and analyze data, the study under evaluation used a quantitative technique that involved questionnaires.

Study Population

Table 1

Study population was consisting of secondary school's head teachers of district Bhakkar as shown in the table.

Tehsils of Districts Bhakkar	No. of Schools		No. of Head Teachers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bhakkar	28	20	28	20
Darya Khan	20	14	20	14
Kalur Kot	18	10	18	10
Mankera	16	09	16	09
Total	82	53	82	53
Grand Total		135		135

Sample Size

Using Yamane's (1973) formula $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, the sample size for the entire population is = 109. Using the stratified sampling technique (representation of each stratum), 65 male head teacher and 44 females head teachers were in the sample.

Sampling Technique

Given that the participants in this research represent districts Bhakkar, the use of random sampling is considered appropriate.

Instrumentation

In educational research, surveys are seen to be the most effective way to collect data. The purpose of this study is to investigate leadership styles as a factor affecting secondary school head teacher performance. Therefore, it is decided that a survey is suitable for this research study.

Data Collection Process

Data for this study was gathered through questionnaires.

DATA ANALYSIS**Descriptive Statistics (Leadership Styles)****Table 2**

Leadership style	Mean score (1-5)	SD	Interpretation
Transformational	3.97	0.72	Adoption
Transactional	3.44	0.85	Moderate Adoption
Democratic	4.08	0.68	Very High Adoption
Autocratic	2.39	0.91	Rarely Used
Laissez- Faire	2.99	0.79	Low Adoption

Democratic leadership is most common ($M=4.08$, $SD=0.68$), followed by transformational ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.72$), and transactional ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.85$), according to descriptive statistics. In contrast to directive or passive leadership styles, head teachers strongly preferred collaborative and inspiring approaches, as evidenced by the much lower prevalence of autocratic ($M=2.39$, $SD=0.91$) and laissez-faire ($M=2.99$, $SD=0.79$) styles.

Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis: Leadership styles correlate with teacher motivation (Q26-30) and student performance (Q31-35).

Table 3

Variable pair	Pearson's (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Transformational \times Teacher Motivation	0.64	<0.01	Strong positive link
Democratic \times Teacher Motivation	0.57	<0.01	Significant positive
Transactional \times Student Performance	0.34	0.05	Weak positive
Autocratic \times Teacher Motivation	-0.53	<0.01	Strong negative impact
Laissez-Faire \times School Climate	-0.29	0.06	Marginal negative trend

According to the Pearson's product correlation study, transactional leadership has a modestly positive impact on student achievement ($r=0.34$, $p=0.05$), but transformational ($r=0.64$) and democratic ($r=0.57$) leadership significantly increase teacher motivation ($p<0.01$). Laissez-faire leadership has somewhat detrimental impacts on school atmosphere ($r=-0.29$, $p=0.06$), whereas autocratic leadership considerably lowers motivation ($r=-0.53$, $p<0.01$), indicating that collaborative approaches produce the greatest results. All things considered, transactional leadership is used to a significant extent but lacks robust incentive systems.

ANOVA: Leadership Style vs School Effectiveness (Q36-40)

Null Hypothesis (H_0): No difference in school effectiveness across leadership styles.

Table 4

Source	SS	Df	MS	F-Value	p-value	Result
Between Groups	28.45	4	7.12	5.68	< 0.01	H_0 Rejected
Within Groups	114.30	103	1.09			

The null hypothesis is rejected based on the ANOVA results, which show statistically significant variations in school performance among leadership styles ($F=5.68$, $p<0.01$). With a mean square between-groups of 7.12 and a within-groups value of 1.09, the study shows that the leadership strategy has a significant influence on school performance.

results. At least one leadership style yields significantly different effectiveness outcomes than others, according to the significant F-value, which calls for additional post-hoc analysis to pinpoint the precise styles responsible for these variations. These results support the idea that a key element in influencing academic achievement is the choice of leadership style. Autocratic or laissez-faire schools do far worse than those with democratic or transformative leadership.

Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable (DV): School Effectiveness (Q36-40)

Predictors (IVs): Transformational, Transactional, Democratic Styles

Table 5

Variable	β (Coefficient)	SE	t-value	p-value	Significance
Transformational	0.48	0.12	4.00	< 0.01	Yes
Democratic	0.52	0.10	5.20	< 0.01	Yes
Transactional	0.18	0.09	2.00	0.07	No.

According to the regression study, school performance is substantially predicted by transformational ($\beta=0.48$, $p<0.01$) and democratic ($\beta=0.52$, $p<0.01$) leadership styles, but transactional leadership has a modest impact ($\beta=0.18$, $p<0.07$). When compared to reward-based techniques, the model explains 54% of the variance in school effectiveness ($R^2=0.54$), showing that inspiring and participatory approaches significantly improve institutional performance.

Gender-Based Differences (Independent Samples t-Test)

Hypothesis: Leadership styles differ by head teacher gender.

Table 6

Leadership Style	Male (n=65) Mean	Female (n=44) Mean	Mean t-value	p-value
Transformational	4.05	3.87	1.47	0.15
Democratic	4.14	4.33	-2.02	0.03
Autocratic	2.47	2.19	2.24	0.03
Transactional	3.50	3.36	1.14	0.26
Laissez-Faire	2.98	2.85	0.88	0.39

Significant disparities in leadership styles are shown by the gender analysis: female head teachers are less autocratic (2.19 vs 2.47, $p=0.04$) and more democratic (4.33 vs 4.14, $p=0.03$) than their male counterparts. For transformational ($p=0.15$), transactional ($p=0.26$), and laissez-faire ($p=0.39$) leadership styles, no significant gender differences were found, indicating that women typically choose more collaborative tactics while males employ somewhat more directive techniques.

Moderation Analysis (Hierarchical Regression)

Question: Does school size moderate the leadership-effectiveness relationship?

Predictors:

Step 1: Transformational Leadership (TL)

Step 2: School Size (Small/Large)

Step 3: TL \times School Size Interaction

Table 7

Model	R ² Change	F Change	p-value
Step 1 (TL)	0.29	42.13	< 0.01
Step 2 (Size)	0.04	4.56	0.03
Step 3 (Interaction)	0.05	6.24	0.01

Interaction Plot:

Large schools: TL has stronger impact ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$).

Small schools: TL effect weaker ($\beta = 0.39$, $p = 0.03$).

Transformational leadership is more effective in large schools, likely due to greater need for vision alignment

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**Key Findings**

- Leadership Style Prevalence:** Democratic (Mean = 4.08) and Transformational (Mean = 3.97) were the most dominant leadership styles. Autocratic (Mean = 2.39) and Laissez-Faire (Mean = 2.99) were the least adopted.
- Impact on Teacher Motivation:** Transformational ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$) and Democratic ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$) leadership strongly correlated with higher teacher motivation. Autocratic leadership ($r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$) had a significant negative effect.
- Effect on Student Performance:** Transactional leadership ($r = 0.34$, $p = 0.05$) had a weak but measurable impact on student results. Schools with transformational/democratic leadership showed higher academic achievement (ANOVA, $p < 0.01$).
- Gender Differences:** Female head teachers were more democratic (Mean = 4.33 vs 4.13, $p = 0.03$) and less autocratic (Mean = 2.19 vs 2.47, $p = 0.04$) than males.
- Mediation Effect:** Teacher motivation mediated 44% of the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.
- Moderation by School Size:** The strength of transformational leadership in large schools ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$) was greater as compared to small schools ($\beta = 0.39$, $p = 0.04$).

Result Summary

According to the study, the most successful leadership philosophies are transformational (vision-driven, enhances school atmosphere) and democratic (greatest adoption, strong teacher motivation); the least successful are autocratic (decreases morale) and laissez-faire (lacks accountability). The influence of transformational leadership is moderated by school size (it is greater in larger schools), gender differences (female leaders prefer more interactive techniques), and teacher motivation as a mediator of leadership performance are important influencing variables. These results demonstrate how crucial flexible, team-based leadership is to raising academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

The best leadership styles are democratic and transformational. Collaborative, vision-driven leadership should be promoted in schools to improve student results and teacher motivation. Head teachers should get adaptive leadership training from professional development programs, which combines transformational and democratic techniques.

Avoid Autocratic and Laissez-Faire Styles

While laissez-faire leadership results in poor accountability, autocratic leadership lowers teacher morale. While short-term transactional or autocratic methods may be necessary for crisis management, long-term dependence is harmful.

Gender and Context Matter

Female leaders tend to be more participative, suggesting gender-balanced leadership teams could be beneficial. Large schools benefit more from transformational leadership due to complex stakeholder alignment needs.

Policy Recommendations

Training: Focus on adaptive, situational leadership for head teachers.

Monitoring: Assess leadership impact through teacher/student feedback, not just administrative metrics.

Support Systems: Provide coaching for autocratic leaders to shift toward democratic practices.

DISCUSSION

This study has led to remarkable findings in determining the styles of the leadership adopted by the head teacher in a secondary school and influence on the motivation of the teachers, the performance of the students and effectiveness of the school. The findings reveal that more dominant is a democratic style of leadership and transformational leadership style, and both are most effective when it comes to motivating teachers and effectiveness in schools. The given findings align with the previous studies concerning the significance of collaborative and visionary leadership when applied in the educational setting (Leithwood and Sun, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023).

This research study contributes to a static collection of literature that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership are probable to have realistic expenses on schools. In our data, such strategies were always associated with a lower teacher motivation and the performance of schools. We have seen this trend previously: authoritarian leadership is linked to poor employee morale and inadequately promoted innovation (Rahman et al., 2023), and laissez-faire leadership is also linked to stagnated professional growth and a lack of organization development (Clarkson and Carpenter, 2021). Furthermore, the management cultures that obscure accountability may cement the diffuse responsibility and permissive, non-exclusive decision-making behavior -the situations where a key problem is not owned or intrinsically resolved (Wang et al., 2021).

In comparison, our moderation tests report that payoff to transformational leadership levels increases with the size of a school. Schools with a larger population will require more rigorous vision alignment, coordination among cross-teams and management; transformational leadership seems to be the kind of leader that is able to craft more coherent and motivating direction between moving parts. This size-by-style interaction highlights a simple yet a critical thing that leadership effectiveness depends upon situation. Theorizing and practice that disregards characteristics like organizational size, community structure, and the governance systems can be subjected to cannot give prescriptions of the one-size-fits-all types that do not work in practice.

Study Recommendations

1. Development Leadership Programs: Create long-term development trajectories of head teachers based on adaptive and situational.

2. **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Develop a light-touch, continuous M&E cycle that monitors changes in the leadership practice on teacher motivation, student achievement and overall school performance. Combine mixed methods (pulse surveys, learning-walk rubrics, student outcome dashboards) and close the loop by feedback sessions (on next steps).
3. **Targeted Support Systems:** Provide coaching and mentoring to those head teachers whose default includes autocratic or laissez-faire coaching. Mix them with the veteran transformational leaders, provide them with few concrete objectives of practice (say, collaborative planning procedures, participatory goal setting), and present to them the materials of skills to shift and not comply only.
4. **Balance in Leadership Teams:** Intentionally create the gender balanced leadership work teams. The heterogeneous teams are more likely to generate larger differences in opinion and frame the problems better and are able to serve more inclusive decision in favor of democratic and transformational goals.
5. **Context-Responsive Design:** Include contextual issues in the assessment and the instruction design. School size, intricacy of its governance or socio-economic backgrounds, require and measure demand and achievement levels in coaching when constructing leadership curriculum. To ensure that large schooling focuses more on modules on alignment of vision and role clarity and the ability to engage the stakeholders and the smaller schooling concentrates on agility, the breadth of roles and the community partnerships.
By adopting these recommendations, educational policymakers and administrators can ensure that effective leadership practices supporting teacher motivation, student achievement and school effectiveness are in place.
6. **Implications for Policy and Practice:** The results of the research have policy and practice implications in the field of educational leadership. The leadership development programs which are marked by the use of transformational and democratic leadership styles should be at the center of the list of policymakers and administrators, and the head teachers should be supported in the developmental aspects of leadership skills. Also, it should be based on the contextual factors that moderate the effectiveness of leadership styles such as size of school and socioeconomic environment.
By ensuring good leadership practices in schools, educational institutions can boost motivation of teachers, the performance of students, and the effectiveness of both schools and ultimately bring good educational outcomes for all the students.

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