

**Principal Leadership Style and Its Impact on Teachers' Job Satisfaction at the College
Level**

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Abstract

Effective leadership in educational institutions is crucial in creating a supportive work environment and improving teacher job satisfaction. This study investigates the effect of various principal leadership styles on the job satisfaction of college teachers. The research was conducted with a sample of 400 college instructors selected through simple random sampling. Bivariate correlations and multivariable mediation analysis using linear regression were applied to analyze the data. The study focused on four leadership styles—directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented—and their impact on teacher job satisfaction. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation, with participative leadership demonstrating the strongest association. Furthermore, the moderator analysis indicated that age (Coeff 1.4524, p -value < 0.0000) and work experience (coefficient = 0.0090, p -value < 0.0000) significantly influenced this relationship, whereas academic qualifications did not. Future studies should examine alternative leadership models, such as transformational and servant leadership, to assess their impact on teacher satisfaction and institutional performance. Additionally, longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of leadership strategies in educational settings.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Principals, Job Satisfaction, College Teachers

Introduction

Educational leadership shapes teachers' working environment, motivation, and overall job satisfaction (Ahmad et al., 2025). Among the various leadership roles, the principal's leadership style has a significant influence on the organizational culture, work engagement, and teacher professional development opportunities (Alzoraiki et al., 2023). Effective leadership is fundamental in establishing a structured yet adaptable work environment that promotes teachers' well-being, commitment, and professional growth (Jilani et al., 2024). Research has consistently shown that when leaders create a supportive and participatory environment, employees exhibit higher job satisfaction, leading to improved performance and reduced turnover rates (Even & BenDavid-Hadar, 2025). This relationship is particularly significant in the educational setting as teacher job satisfaction directly impacts student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness (Thamrin et al., 2024).

Leadership styles affect the teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. A principal's leadership style is pivotal in shaping teachers' job satisfaction, particularly at the college level. A leader is an individual who plays a vital role within an organization (Badrun et al., 2022). He assigns different tasks to achieve the desired goals. Leaders collaborate with employees to ensure their job satisfaction and overall well-being. Successful leadership depends on making accurate and honest decisions, employing effective leadership styles, and understanding the needs of followers (Sugiyanto, 2025; Washburn et al., 2023).

Leaders interact with their subordinates in diverse ways depending on their leadership style, and many leadership theories have been developed around these styles to foster employee satisfaction (Saleh & Arhas, 2024; Safrida et al., 2023). The Path-Goal Theory, proposed by House (1971), offers valuable insights into how specific leadership behaviors can influence motivation and job satisfaction. This theory suggests that leaders contribute to employee well-being by clarifying goals, providing essential resources, and eliminating barriers to performance. The four main styles—directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented—each play a role in shaping employee involvement and contentment (Masykuroh et al., 2025). In educational settings, these styles

significantly impact teachers' views on administrative support, autonomy in their roles, and the overall work environment. Principals who apply these styles effectively can enhance teacher motivation, alleviate job-related stress, and cultivate a more cooperative work culture (Mariano & Oco, 2024; Sarwar et al., 2022).

Job satisfaction encompasses an individual's perception of their work environment, including organizational culture and relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Maqbool et al., 2023). It is shaped by past experiences and current expectations, influencing how employees evaluate their roles and work conditions (Gusriani et al., 2022). As a multifaceted concept, job satisfaction is influenced by job characteristics, personal traits, and social dynamics within the workplace (Syarifiah et al., 2025). In educational contexts, teachers' contentment with their jobs is closely tied to fair compensation, which not only contributes to financial well-being but also fosters a more positive and optimistic outlook (Pacia & Guevarra, 2024). Elements such as salary, working conditions, and additional benefits have a significant impact on teachers' morale and satisfaction. When teachers feel fulfilled, they are more likely to be dedicated to their profession, resulting in improved performance, enhanced instructional quality, and a more enthusiastic approach to teaching (Rohimin et al., 2022).

Rahmamulyati et al. (2025) highlighted that intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including salary, work environment, professional growth opportunities, and administrative support, shape teacher job satisfaction. While extrinsic elements, such as compensation and benefits, play a crucial role, intrinsic factors, including recognition, respect, and a sense of purpose, are also essential for sustaining long-term job satisfaction (Maqbool et al., 2024). Leadership that prioritizes professional growth, values teacher input, and fosters a positive school culture is more likely to retain high-quality educators (Parveen et al., 2022). As educational institutions evolve, understanding the interplay between leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction becomes essential for improving faculty retention and student success (Iskandar et al., 2023).

Principal leadership styles have a significant impact on teacher job satisfaction. Students' performance is enhanced when teachers are satisfied with their jobs (Hariyasasti, 2025). Teachers who do not feel supported and motivated in educational institutions become unsatisfied with their profession (Masykuroh et al., 2025; Norman et al., 2024). Teachers who experience high job satisfaction are less likely to transfer to other schools or leave the profession, even when faced with challenges in their work environment (Ombao & Jesus, 2025). A combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, demographic variables, and individual characteristics influences their satisfaction. Various other factors, such as pay, perceptions of administrative support, school safety, and access to educational resources, have been linked to teacher satisfaction (Iskandar et al., 2023; Gazali & Bafadal, 2025).

Research Methodology

Sampling and Research Design

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The target population consisted of all college teachers in Lahore, Pakistan. A simple random sampling technique was employed to collect the data. The study sample consisted of 400 teachers, 200 male and 200 female, from colleges in Lahore, Pakistan.

Research Instrument

Researchers adapted two standardized scales: the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (1998) and the Dammen Job Satisfaction Scale (2001). The LBDQ assessed four leadership styles—directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented—each with five items. The Dammen Scale evaluated teachers' job satisfaction using nine indicators: pay, promotion, and working conditions.

The instrument consisted of three sections: demographic information, principal leadership styles, and job satisfaction, rated on a five-point Likert scale. Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.85 for the LBDQ and 0.87 for the Dammen Scale confirmed reliability. Expert reviews established the content validity of the instruments, ensuring they effectively measured leadership styles and job satisfaction.

Measures Variables

The independent variables in the study were four leadership styles—directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented—each measured using five statements. The dependent variable, job satisfaction, was assessed using multiple facets, including pay (2 statements), supervision (2), reward (1), co-worker relations (2), communication (1), promotion (3), benefits (2),

operating conditions (4), nature of work (4), and general satisfaction (3). Moderating variables included qualifications (measured categorically), age, and work experience (both measured as continuous variables). This approach ensured a detailed analysis of the relationships among variables.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were gathered in June 2023 through self-administered questionnaires, which were distributed under the direct supervision of the researchers. Participants were encouraged to answer honestly and without apprehension, with assurances of complete confidentiality. The study's objectives were communicated to all respondents, and assistance was provided as needed. The researchers personally retrieved the completed questionnaires. Each participant received an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the measures taken to protect their privacy. To maintain anonymity, coding procedures were used, and all data were stored securely. Participants were informed that their involvement would not influence their professional status and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software (version 25), employing both descriptive and inferential techniques. A codebook aligned with a five-point Likert scale—ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"—was developed to interpret responses. To investigate the association between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted. Furthermore, linear regression was employed for a multivariable mediation analysis to assess how different leadership styles influenced job satisfaction, while controlling for factors such as academic qualifications, age, and professional experience.

Results

Table 1

Demographic information of the college teachers (N=400)

Characteristics	Frequency
Age	
25-35	233
36-45	138
46-55	26
56-65	3
Gender	
Male	200
Female	200
Job Nature	
Permanent	276
Contractual	124
Work Experience	
Less than 1 year	81
1-5 years	168
6-10 years	83
11-20 years	65
21-30 years	3

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the study participants. Most of the teachers (233) were between the ages of 25 and 35, followed by 138 in the 36–45 age group. A smaller number of teachers belonged to the older age brackets, with 26 aged 46–55 and only three aged 56–65, indicating a predominantly younger workforce. The gender distribution was evenly balanced, with 200 male and 200 female teachers. Regarding the nature of their jobs, a significant number of teachers (276) held permanent positions, while 124 were employed on a contractual basis. Regarding work experience, the largest group (168 teachers) had 1–5 years of experience, followed by 83 teachers with 6–10 years and 81 with less than 1 year of experience. A smaller number had 11–20 years (65 teachers) of experience, and only three fell into the 21–30 years category.

Table 2

Correlations between Principal Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction (N=400)

No. Variables	N	M	S. D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Directive	400	16.83	4.29	1	.715**	.714**	.739**	.892**	.644**
2. Supportive	400	16.59	4.16		1	.740**	.683**	.881**	.637**
3. Participative	400	16.80	4.27			1	.721**	.894**	.635**

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4. Achievement Oriented	400	16.74	4.31		1	.886**	.616**
5. Leadership Style	400	66.97	15.14			1	.713**
6. Job Satisfaction	400	68.32	17.02				1

Table 2 presents the correlations between the principal leadership styles (Directive, Supportive, Participative, and Achievement-oriented) and the job satisfaction of college teachers. The tables indicate a significant positive correlation, particularly between job satisfaction and the principal leadership styles of directive ($r = 0.892^{**}$), supportive ($r = 0.881^{**}$), participatory ($r = 0.894^{**}$), and achievement-oriented ($r = 0.886^{**}$) leadership, which are strongly correlated. Job satisfaction and the principal leadership style positively correlate ($r = .713^{**}$). The results suggested a statistical relationship between principal leadership styles and college teachers' job satisfaction, indicating a strong correlation between specific leadership styles and the job satisfaction of college teachers.

Table 3

Results of the linear regressions of the simple mediation models ($N=400$)

	Moderator (Qualification, Age, & Work experience)			Total Impact		
	Coeff	SE	P	Coeff	SE	P
Antecedent						
Constant	3.2826	.7358	.0000			
Leadership Styles	-.4646	.2172	.0331	.1042	.0421	.0138
Qualifications	-.2278	.1469	.1219			
	R ² =0.23					
Constant	2.1734	1.0815	.0451			
Leadership Styles	1.4524	.3095	.0000	.5047	.1926	.0091
Age	2.8540	.6810	.0000			
	R ² =0.49					
Constant	2.3860	.9114	.0092			
Leadership Styles	.0090	.2723	.0000	.1576	.0797	.0091
Work experience	.0941	.2704	.0000			
	R ² =0.36					

Note: dependent variable, Job satisfaction; $\alpha_{critical} = 0.025$. *Coeff* = Coefficients; *SE* = Standard Error; *p* = p-value.

The results from the linear regression analyses indicate that the impact of leadership styles, qualifications, age, and work experience on job satisfaction varies depending on the moderator. Leadership styles have a negative and significant influence on job satisfaction after controlling for variable qualifications (Coeff = -0.4646, $p = 0.0331$). However, the qualifications themselves do not have a significant impact ($p = 0.1219$). The model explains 23% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.23$). In the second model, leadership styles statistically affect job satisfaction after controlling for the variable age (Coeff 1.4524, p -value < 0.0000). Age also has a significant and positive effect on job satisfaction (coefficient = 2.8540, $p = 0.025$). However, after controlling for variable work experience, both leadership styles and work experience continue to have a significant and positive effect on job satisfaction. Leadership styles have a significant positive impact (Coeff= 0.0090, p -value < 0.0000), while work experience also exerts a positive influence (Coeff= 0.0941, p -value < 0.0000; $R^2 = 0.36$).

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed a significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. The study findings reveal a strong relationship between participative leadership and job satisfaction, which aligns with Hariyasasti (2025), suggesting that teachers feel more valued and engaged when involved in decision-making. However, Sudadi et al. (2023) suggest that while participative leadership is essential, task-oriented leadership styles have a greater impact on teacher job satisfaction in specific educational contexts. This discrepancy highlights the importance of contextual adaptability in leadership approaches. Our study results also emphasize that clear guidance and structured expectations from leaders contribute to teachers' contentment, which has a significant relationship between directive leadership and job satisfaction. Wardana et al. (2024) found that directive leadership enhances efficiency in schools with less-experienced teachers by providing clear performance expectations. Conversely, this contrasts with Parveen et al. (2022), who argued that overly directive leadership could limit teacher autonomy, thereby reducing intrinsic motivation. The existing literature variation suggests that the effectiveness of directive leadership is contingent upon

teachers' experience levels and institutional culture (Rohimin et al., 2022; Washburn, 2023; Even & BenDavid-Hadar, 2025).

Our study results also show that leadership styles significantly influence job satisfaction when controlled for teachers' age and experience, but not for their qualifications. Specifically, the statistically significant impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction after controlling for variables such as age and work experience. These findings align with Masykuroh's (2025) emphasis that experienced teachers are more receptive to leadership styles that promote professional growth. However, younger teachers may benefit more from supportive leadership due to their need for mentorship (Sarah et al., 2023). The insignificant impact of qualifications on job satisfaction diverges from Mariano and Oco (2024), who suggested that teachers with higher qualifications expect more autonomy and recognition, which in turn influences their satisfaction levels. Several studies revealed how personal and professional attributes of teachers impact their job satisfaction (Badrun et al., 2022; Pacia & Gusriani et al., 2022; Sarwar et al., 2022). However, Ombao 2025 suggests that female teachers may respond more positively to supportive leadership due to a greater emphasis on collaboration. This study's findings suggest a more universal application of leadership styles across genders, reinforcing the importance of a balanced leadership approach that accommodates diverse perspectives.

Schools and colleges that foster a supportive and engaging work environment through effective leadership are more likely to retain skilled educators, reducing turnover rates and ensuring consistency in student learning experiences (Hariyasasti, 2025). Given the growing challenges in teacher retention, educational policymakers should consider leadership training programs for principals, equipping them with the skills to apply varied leadership approaches tailored to different teacher profiles (Alzoraiki et al., 2023). The current study's findings emphasize that while leadership styles significantly impact job satisfaction, their effectiveness varies based on contextual factors such as teacher experience, institutional culture, and individual expectations. Schools and colleges that cultivate adaptive leadership practices are more likely to maintain a satisfied teaching workforce, thereby enhancing educational outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that principal leadership styles have a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction, particularly in terms of directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented approaches. Directive leadership was associated with the highest mean satisfaction, suggesting that clear guidance and expectations contribute positively to teacher morale. Moreover, participative leadership is strongly correlated with job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of teacher involvement in decision-making processes.

Moderator analysis further demonstrated that teachers' age and experience influence leadership effectiveness, whereas qualifications did not significantly impact job satisfaction. These findings underscore the need for school leaders to adopt flexible leadership styles tailored to their staff's professional backgrounds. The study found no significant gender-based differences in leadership perceptions, suggesting that leadership strategies should focus more on situational adaptability rather than demographic considerations.

Given the strong correlation between leadership styles and job satisfaction, policymakers and educational institutions should prioritize leadership training programs that equip principals with diverse and adaptive leadership skills. Future research should explore additional leadership models, such as transformational and servant leadership, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of leadership in enhancing teacher satisfaction and institutional success.

Recommendations and Limitations

This study used only college teachers as a sample; future studies could research the school level. Leadership training programs should equip principals with adaptive strategies to meet the diverse needs of teachers. To enhance job satisfaction, administrators must consider situational factors, such as teacher experience and institutional culture. Schools should foster participative leadership by involving teachers in decision-making and establishing mentorship programs to support early-career educators. The study's sample size was 400, and future research should expand this and include qualitative studies for deeper insights. Exploring leadership models such as transformational, servant, and situational approaches is essential. Lastly, gender-inclusive strategies should ensure equity and motivate all teachers.

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