



Leadership Styles and School Effectiveness: Evaluating Their Role in Promoting Quality Education in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the connection between leadership styles and the effectiveness of schools in advancing quality education in educational institutions of Pakistan. The research used a structured questionnaire with 40 items for data collection, which was administered to teachers and school administrators from the entire Punjab. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, for instance, frequency distributions, independent sample t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The results showed that among other things, the two leadership styles of transformational and instructional have a significant impact on the motivation of teachers, the school climate, and total academic outcomes, whereas the transactional leadership type revealed the least influence. The research underlines the message that successful leadership facilitates the interplay of co-operative learning, innovation and being accountable which in turn leads to the organization's efficiency. It also argues the important qualities associated with professional development scenarios that aid in the evolution of a visionary and participatory leadership approach. Such research outcomes are extremely valuable for policymakers, school administrators, and educators as they are the ones who bring about changes in leadership style and thus are the instrument for making reforms towards sustainable quality education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Leadership styles, school effectiveness, transformational leadership, quality education, Pakistan.

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Introduction

Education of high quality is still the main target of every nation globally. Even so, in Pakistan, this target faces numerous obstacles caused by inequalities, shortage of resources, and diverse institutional capacities. School leadership is vital in this scenario to be the change that will enhance the conditions for teaching, learning, and overall school achievements. Leadership styles influence the practices of administration only but the atmosphere, teacher motivation, instructional quality, and stakeholder engagement as well. The role of an efficient leader can be resource mobilization, the implementation of education reform, and building a culture of continuous progress that favors school effectiveness (Amin et al., 2024). Studies have recently confirmed that a school leader being physically there is not what makes the school effective but the choice of the leader personality among transformational, instructional, transactional, or distributed leadership significantly affects the results. The situation of varying constraints and expectations in different provinces where schools operate in Pakistan makes it very possible that the style of leadership and the school effectiveness interaction is deeper than imagined. Primary through examining how different leadership styles relate to measurable school effectiveness indicators such as student achievement, teacher performance, and institutional climate, this study intends to make the educational sector open to reform further (Amjad et al., 2024).

Furthermore, teacher experience, institutional type (public vs. private), and leadership training are the demographic and contextual factors that may moderate or mediate these relationships. It is of great importance that these intricacies be understood in order that training and development resources be allocated to those leadership models which show the greatest potential. This study is therefore aimed at filling the void in Pakistan's educational leadership literature by providing comparative, context-sensitive evidence on how leadership style drives school effectiveness across multiple types of institutions (Amin et al., 2024). Leadership theory in education has undergone changes over time, from a situation of management and administrative control to the present day where the more dynamic models focusing on instruction, collaboration, and change are emphasized. Instructional leadership highlights issues related to curriculum, staff development, and supervision; transformational leadership stresses the significance of vision, enthusiasm, and change orientation; transactional leadership is at its core with the use of rewards and punishments within the parameters of the contract; and distributed leadership assigns the power for decision-making to the members of the school community. The models are implemented as frameworks by schools around the world to examine how the school leaders contribute to the effectiveness of the schools (Amin et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, several studies have examined individual leadership styles in relation to school outcomes. For example, Hussain & Hayat (2022) investigated the effectiveness of leadership styles in secondary schools and found that participative (or selling) leadership was linked with better institutional performance. The study highlighted that headteachers' style had significant effects on school culture and effectiveness indicators. Likewise, research in Peshawar indicates that principals' leadership style significantly influences teacher job satisfaction in vocational settings (Alam, 2025). More recent work in Bahawalpur has shown that collaborative leadership practices positively affect classroom management, student achievement, and teacher empowerment (Riaz, 2024). Additionally, national initiatives focused on inclusion and equity have emphasized school leaders' role as agents of change, arguing that leaders must play a central role in addressing disparities in access, resources, and outcomes (Wolfenden et al., 2022).

These studies provide important insights but are often limited in scope either focusing on a single leadership style, a single institution type, or a narrow region. The diversity of school settings in Pakistan (public, private, rural, urban, madrassa, etc.) suggests that more comprehensive studies are needed to generalize findings and guide policy. Despite the growing number of studies on leadership and school outcomes in Pakistan, key gaps remain. First, most studies focus on a single leadership style or compare only two styles, rather than examining multiple leadership models simultaneously in a single framework. Second, many studies are limited to one region or school type (e.g., public secondary schools), which hampers broader generalization. Third, few studies incorporate measurable school effectiveness indicators such as student learning outcomes, teacher performance, retention, satisfaction, and school climate into the analysis of leadership impacts. Fourth, there is limited examination of contextual moderators or mediators (e.g., leadership training, experience, institutional constraints) that may influence how leadership style translates into effectiveness in Pakistan's diverse contexts. This study intends to fill these gaps by comparing multiple leadership styles across a representative sample of public and private schools in Punjab and using school effectiveness metrics as outcome variables, while also exploring moderating factors (Amin et al., 2024).

Although educational reforms in Pakistan have targeted curricula, teacher training, and governance, school performance disparities persist widely. Some schools excel while others struggle dramatically even within the same district. One compelling explanation for this inconsistency is that leadership practices vary significantly and may account for differences in institutional effectiveness. However, due to the lack of comprehensive evidence comparing leadership styles and linking them to concrete school outcome measures, educational stakeholders lack empirical guidance on which leadership models to prioritize. Without this evidence, leadership development programs risk being generic and inefficient. The problem, then, is: *which leadership styles most strongly determine school effectiveness in Pakistan, and under what contextual conditions* do their effects hold? Addressing this problem is essential for tailored capacity building and sustainable educational improvement. To evaluate the role of different leadership styles in promoting school effectiveness among educational institutions in Punjab, Pakistan.

1. To assess the prevalence of leadership styles (transformational, instructional, transactional, distributed) among school principals and administrators.
2. To examine the relationship between leadership style and school effectiveness indicators (student outcomes, teacher performance, school climate).
3. To compare the effects of leadership style across institutional types (public vs. private) and teacher experience levels.
4. To identify moderating or mediating factors (e.g., leadership training, institutional resources) in the link between leadership styles and school effectiveness.
5. To propose evidence-based recommendations for leadership development and policy strategies in Pakistan.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it advances leadership and educational effectiveness literature by integrating multiple leadership models and empirically testing their differential effects on school effectiveness in the Pakistani context. It will also shed light on contextual moderators or mediators, enriching our understanding of how leadership translates into outcomes. Practically, the findings will guide policymakers, educational administrators, and teacher-training institutions in prioritizing leadership development programs directed at styles that yield the greatest returns in the

Pakistani setting. By illuminating which leadership practices are most effective across public and private schools and across experience levels, this research can help optimize resource allocation, design more targeted training, and accelerate institutional improvements in education quality. Ultimately, it aims to support Pakistan's efforts toward equitable, high-quality schooling for all learners.

Literature Review

The quest for quality education has become the chief feature of the development program that every country, including Pakistan, implements. Although the government has made certain policy decisions and carried out educational reforms, Pakistan's education sector is still facing major problems in the areas of accessibility, fairness, and especially quality (UNESCO, 2019). School leadership has become the focus that can influence not only the efficiency of the institutional capacity but also the academic performance of pupils in this intricate setting. This literature review synthesizes current research (2018-present) on leadership styles and school success in the setting of Pakistan. It seeks to assess critically the leadership concepts that range from transformation and instruction to transaction and distributed leadership theoretically and empirically to reveal their contributions in creating a school atmosphere that is conducive to achieving quality education. The arrangement of this review moves from defining Pakistani-school effectiveness as a framework to considering how specific leadership styles impact, to investigating teacher performance and school climate as mediators and, finally, identifying issues in the current research territory to propose future investigation outlines.

Conceptualizing School Effectiveness in Pakistan

It is essential to understand the qualities of an "effective" school in Pakistan before assessing the impact of leadership. Conventional measures mostly concentrate on numeric indicators such as student enrollments, dropouts, and scores or results especially those of board examinations (Aslam, 2021). Contemporary perspectives have extended the scope of the educational institution successfulness to include the nurturing of children's critical thinking skills, character building, and civic values, besides mere academic achievements, which together represent a comprehensive realization of the National Educational Policy (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2018). A school in Pakistan is increasingly being considered effective not only based on it becoming an academic achievers' factory but also of it being able to prepare individuals capable of facing the global challenges of the 21st century (Halai & Durrani, 2018). The advancement of the school in terms of its serving as a safe, inclusive, and intellectually challenging environment for the learners, its dealing with the parents and the community and the professional and personal life of the teachers are the measures of effectiveness under the multi-dimensional view (Khan et al., 2020). Such a comprehensive perspective provides a strong linkage between the concepts of leadership and the real improvements in schools that are visible and invisible (Aslam, 2021; Halai & Durrani, 2018; Khan et al., 2020; Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2018).

The distinctive aspects of school efficacy in Pakistan scene are the criteria which are further influenced by the idiosyncrasies of the country itself. Among the issues which characterize the complex situation for school leaders in Pakistan are gender disparity, socio-economic constraints on education, regional imbalances, and the differential quality of educational infrastructure (public vs. private) (Malik & Nasim, 2018). Hence, a school leader of great effectiveness in the Pakistani context would be an instructional guru, a resourceful manager, a community mobilization agent, and a torch bearer of egalitarianism all rolled into one. The literature also reveals that principals in deprived (low-resource) areas usually must

work on the provision of basic facilities, and they also have the responsibility to maintain regularity of attendance for students as well as for teachers, and these two aspects are the basic pillars of effectiveness in such schools (Shafi et al., 2020). Therefore, the school effectiveness model of Pakistan is inherently dependent on the context, requiring leadership that has been informed by global trends but that is also locally responsive (Malik & Nasim, 2018; Shafi et al., 2020).

Transformational Leadership: A Catalyst for Change

Of all the different leadership styles that were studied in educational research, the transformational leadership has been in the spotlight the most as it is said to be a principal driver of school improvement. Starting with the initiatives of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) in transforming leadership, the latter leadership type is described as one where the leader through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration not only lead but also deeply connect to his followers to accomplish the loftiest of goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership is frequently described in Pakistan as a cleaning agent for the frozen and over-regulated education sector. The research of Qureshi and Ahmed (2021) shows that along with the four dimensions of transformational leadership behaviors, principals overall were able to summon the staff by helping them realize the organizational commitment through the adoption of pedagogical changes. Such leaders do not just tell teachers what to do but let them experience and contribute to a major cause of educational excellence (Qureshi & Ahmed, 2021).

The influence of transformational leadership on teacher motivation is very powerful in Pakistan, where teachers' morale gets grounded by low salary, big classes, and no chances of growth (Shah & Aslam, 2022). For example, the research of Ali and Saeed (2020) shows a solid positive connection between the practices of transformational leadership by school heads and the satisfaction of teachers' work in both public and private secondary schools in Punjab. This means that through the support and development of teachers, transformational leaders become the most important partaking the classroom instruction, student learning and education thus higher school effectiveness eventually (Ali & Saeed, 2020; Shah & Aslam, 2022).

Instructional Leadership: Focusing on the Core Mission

One of the key features of the instructional leadership is its focus on the core technology of schooling: communication with teaching staff and students. Hallinger's (2011) pattern which outlines the arranger's part in setting the school's goals, governing the instructional program, and encouraging a positive school learning climate is a model that has been taken up in most surveys done in Pakistan. Instructional leaders are deeply involved in the academic life of the school; they visit classes, give teachers their needed support and ensure that the curriculum is covered effectively (Hallinger, 2018). Through research on high-performing schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Iqbal and Aziz (2019) have found that effective principals are those who consistently act as instructional leaders. Moreover, they were openly involved in overseeing pupils' progression, organizing curriculum alignment, and facilitating professional learning communities where teachers can collaborate in lesson planning and student assessment strategies (Hallinger, 2018; Iqbal & Aziz, 2019).

Instructional leadership in Pakistan is mostly effective through its direct influence on the pedagogical processes. In contrast with the common style of administrative leadership that is often found in schools, instructional leadership needs a hands-on approach. Here the leader, aside from taking care of uninterrupted instructional time, providing the needed teaching resources, and being a model of good teaching practice, is also expected to be a very

efficient manager (Siddiqui & Soomro, 2021). Nonetheless, some contextual barriers to the practice of instructional leadership exist. This is so because many principals in the public sector have too many administrative tasks that consume most of their time and give them little time for instructional supervision (Khan & Chishti, 2019). Besides, a hierarchy cultural tradition sometimes condition teachers to be reluctant towards direct classroom observation and receiving feedback from the principal. Although these difficulties are present, the proof still directs, according to Khan and Chishti (2019); Siddiqui and Soomro (2021), that when instructional leadership is given priority, it leads to the implementation of an academic program that is both coherent and focused, thereby directly contributing to school effectiveness, particularly in the area of student academic advancement.

Transactional Leadership and Other Styles: The Role of Structure and Compliance

Transactional leadership that uses a contingent reward system and management-by-exception is known as a typical school's style of Pakistan. Consequently, one can see it there, where the public sector runs, and the bureaucratic structures are more rigid. This leadership model deals with activities' organization by adhering to the rules and being the standard, while direct exchange (e.g., rewards for compliance and punishment for the non-compliance) is used as a tool for controlling the progress (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Despite deserved criticism regarding the lack of attraction of the model to higher ideals, findings still show that transactional leadership may mostly attain the security and order of the latter being necessary prerequisites for the school to have a positive effect on the environment of turmoil (Malik, 2020). To illustrate, due to principal's careful supervision and strict operation of the regulations in a situation where teacher absenteeism has become a source of trouble, it can be assured that the classrooms are working (Malik, 2020).

Conversely, overemphasizing transactional leadership has many drawbacks. There is substantial research evidence showing that the transactional leadership style is mostly effective in bringing about compliance. However, it does not promote the development of intrinsic motivation, creativity, and the feeling of a common goal among the teachers (Qureshi & Ahmed, 2021). This situation can lead to the establishment of a culture of dependency and the least possible effort, wherein teachers do only what they are required to do by letter to avoid punishment or obtain a reward, with a minimum of investment in the school-wide vision. The go beyond of transformational, instructional, and transactional styles represents other paradigms, such as distributed or shared leadership, currently under consideration in Pakistani literature. One school of thought that the leadership function could be those that are shared among formal and informal leaders within the school is the distributed leadership model, which is particularly promising. Jomezai & Baloch (2020) claim that in the complex Pakistani school environment, empowering department heads and senior teachers can make the decision-making process quicker and more adaptable, thus improving school capacity for change (Jomezai & Baloch, 2020; Qureshi & Ahmed, 2021).

The Mediating Role of Teacher Performance and School Climate

The relationship between leadership styles and school effectiveness is not direct; it is mediated by several critical variables, with teacher performance and school climate being among the most significant. Effective leadership acts as a catalyst that improves the performance of teachers, which in turn is the most proximal school-based factor affecting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2020). As discussed, transformational and instructional leadership styles positively influence teacher motivation, commitment, and pedagogical skills. Principal leadership style significantly predicted teacher performance in a study of private schools in Pakistan by Bashir and Gani (2020), which acknowledged the

transformational leadership as having the most substantial effect. Essentially, instructional quality goes up when staff are provided with support, recognition, and a challenge by their leadership (Bashir & Gani, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

At the same time, leadership decisively impacts the school's social, emotional, and academic climate - school/organizational context. Trust, collaboration, high expectations, and a mutual emphasis on student learning form the school's effective footprint are characteristics of a positive school climate (Thapa et al., 2013). Hussain and Saeed's (2021) study discovered that principals who embraced a democratic and participative style were more effective in forming a collegial and supportive school climate in Pakistan. This good environment prolongs the involvement of teachers in schoolwork and reduces their demise rate while at the same time raising student engagement and the feeling of their being part of the community. On the other hand, an autocratic or laissez-faire leadership style usually finds its association with a disengaged or toxic school atmosphere that is characterized by disputes among employees, low morale, and the occurrence of bad student behavior. Because of this, a school leader's biggest impact on his/her school might be through the accomplishment of establishing an organizational culture that is healthy enough for both teachers and students to thrive (Hussain & Saeed, 2021).

Contextual Challenges and Gaps in Literature

Implementation of the leadership styles in Pakistan has been a challenge of contextual issues that the literature only partially addresses and incompletely covers the same. The bureaucratic system that is deeply rooted, political meddling in appointments and transfers, and lack of resources so severe that it has already affected many public schools to the extent of creating a hostile environment that can suffocate even the most capable and well-intentioned leaders are just some of the issues faced (Shafi et al., 2020). Moreover, there generally exists a substantial difference between the pre-service and in-service training provided to school principals with very little focus on current leadership theories and practices (Khan & Chishti, 2019). Learning how to manage on the job with the help of traditional authoritarian leadership only and not the data-driven, collaborative way of thought is how most principals develop (Khan & Chishti, 2019; Shafi et al., 2020).

This review also points out several gaps in the existing research body. The first among these is the spatial disproportion where most of the studies are conducted in Punjab and Sindh, while the leadership dynamics of Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir remain largely unexplored. Second, most research is quantitative and relies on self-reported data from surveys. There is a pressing need for more qualitative, in-depth case studies that can capture the nuanced realities of school leadership in action (Jogezai & Baloch, 2020). Third, the student perspective is conspicuously absent. Very few studies investigate how students perceive the leadership of their school and how those perceptions impact their learning experience and outcomes. Finally, there is a lack of longitudinal research that tracks the impact of a specific leadership style on school effectiveness indicators over time, which is essential for establishing causality (Jogezai & Baloch, 2020).

In conclusion, the literature from 2018 to the present unequivocally establishes a strong, albeit mediated, relationship between leadership styles and school effectiveness in Pakistan. Transformational and instructional leadership styles emerge as particularly potent in promoting the conditions necessary for quality education by motivating teachers, focusing on the instructional core, and building a positive school climate. While transactional leadership provides necessary structure, its overuse can inhibit the professional growth and

intrinsic motivation of staff. The emerging discourse on distributed leadership offers a promising alternative for navigating the complexities of the Pakistani educational landscape.

Future research should aim to address the identified gaps. Studies should be expanded to under-researched regions of Pakistan to develop a more nationally representative understanding. Methodologically, a shift towards mixed-methods and qualitative case study approaches would provide richer, more contextualized insights. Researchers must also incorporate student voices to create a more holistic picture of leadership effectiveness. Finally, intervention-based and longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the impact of leadership development programs for aspiring and serving principals in Pakistan. By investing in a deeper, more nuanced understanding of educational leadership, Pakistan can unlock the potential of its schools to deliver the quality education that is fundamental to its national progress.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research was based on quantitative design and descriptive survey methods. The study aimed to find out the connection between leadership styles and school effectiveness in promoting quality education in Pakistan. Such a design was seen as fitting as it permits the gathering of information from a big number of participants and eases the statistical analysis for the identification of patterns and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive model amplifies the understanding of prevailing leadership practices and their impact on the schools' effectiveness; however, no variables are changed.

Population of the Study

The first population of this paper includes the principals and teachers of public and private secondary schools seated in the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan. The mixture of public and private sector institutions ensured wide coverage of leadership practices across various educational settings. Nationally, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), the number of secondary schools is over 30,000, thus, it is necessary to select a manageable and representative sample for analysis purposes.

Sample and Sampling of the Study

The researchers used a multistage stratified random sampling technique to choose study participants. The first stage involved selecting districts—one from each province based on geographical representation. In the next stage, an equal number of public and private secondary schools were selected randomly from each district. In conclusion, one principal and five teachers were taken from each school. The total sample comprised 400 participants (80 principals and 320 teachers). To improve the generalizability of the findings, the stratified random sampling method was used as it allows for each subgroup within the population to be proportionally represented (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Instrument Development

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire comprising three major sections:

1. Demographic information (gender, experience, school type, qualification).
2. Leadership styles measured using a modified version of the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)* developed by Bass and Avolio (2004), which identifies transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles.
3. School effectiveness measured using items adapted from the *School Effectiveness Index* developed by Hoy and Miskel (2013). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Five educational leadership and research methodology experts have evaluated the content and faced validity of the questionnaire. Their feedback was implemented to provide definitions for the items and to ensure that questions were the reflection of the indicated variables of the study. Furthermore, a pre-survey of 30 participants (clarity, understanding, design) was conducted to assess the questionnaire's appropriateness for the final sample. Factor analysis, which permitted verifying how the items corresponded to their respective constructs, was also a measure of theoretical validity.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of the pilot study indicated high internal consistency across all sections:

- Leadership Styles Scale = 0.89
- School Effectiveness Scale = 0.91
- These values exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended for social science research (Taber, 2018), indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected personally by the researcher and through authorized school contacts. Prior permission was obtained from the respective school heads and district education offices. The purpose of the study was explained to participants, ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Respondents were given one week to complete the questionnaire, and follow-ups were made to ensure a high response rate. A total of 400 complete questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 95%.

Data Analysis Procedure

After data collection, responses were coded and entered the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize participant characteristics and variable trends. Inferential analyses, including Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA, were conducted to determine significant differences and relationships among variables. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was applied to identify the predictive power of leadership styles on school effectiveness. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

Data Analysis

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

| Variable | Categories | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 180 | 60.0 |
| | Female | 120 | 40.0 |
| Age | Below 30 years | 65 | 21.7 |
| | 31-40 years | 110 | 36.7 |
| | 41-50 years | 80 | 26.7 |
| | Above 50 years | 45 | 15.0 |
| | | | |
| Qualification | B.Ed | 75 | 25.0 |
| | M.Ed | 140 | 46.7 |
| | M.Phil | 65 | 21.7 |

| Variable | Categories | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Experience | PhD | 20 | 6.6 |
| | 1–5 years | 55 | 18.3 |
| | 6–10 years | 95 | 31.7 |
| | 11–15 years | 80 | 26.7 |
| | Above 15 years | 70 | 23.3 |
| School Type | Public | 190 | 63.3 |
| | Private | 110 | 36.7 |

The majority of respondents were male teachers (60%), aged between 31–40 years (36.7%), holding an M.Ed degree (46.7%), and having 6–10 years of teaching experience (31.7%). Most worked in public schools (63.3%).

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Styles and School Effectiveness*

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|------|---------|---------|
| Instructional Leadership | 300 | 4.02 | 0.49 | 2.90 | 5.00 |
| Transformational Leadership | 300 | 4.15 | 0.52 | 2.75 | 5.00 |
| Transactional Leadership | 300 | 3.88 | 0.61 | 2.40 | 5.00 |
| Distributed Leadership | 300 | 4.09 | 0.50 | 2.80 | 5.00 |
| School Effectiveness | 300 | 4.12 | 0.54 | 2.70 | 5.00 |

An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant gender difference in perceptions of instructional leadership, $t(298) = 1.52$, $p = .13$. Similarly, gender differences in transformational leadership and school effectiveness were not significant ($p > .05$), suggesting comparable perceptions across genders.

Table 3: *Independent Samples t-Test (Gender Differences)*

| Variable | Gender | N | Mean | SD | t | df | p |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Instructional Leadership | Male | 180 | 4.05 | 0.47 | 1.52 | 298 | .130 |
| | Female | 120 | 3.96 | 0.52 | | | |
| Transformational Leadership | Male | 180 | 4.18 | 0.50 | 1.94 | 298 | .053 |
| | Female | 120 | 4.07 | 0.56 | | | |
| School Effectiveness | Male | 180 | 4.16 | 0.55 | 1.79 | 298 | .075 |
| | Female | 120 | 4.03 | 0.52 | | | |

An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant gender difference in perceptions of instructional leadership, $t(298) = 1.52$, $p = .13$. Similarly, gender differences in transformational leadership and school effectiveness were not significant ($p > .05$), suggesting comparable perceptions across genders.

Table 4: *One-Way ANOVA (Qualification and Leadership Styles)*

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|----------------|----------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 3525.06 | 3 | 1175.02 | 12.92 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 27027.86 | 296 | 91.32 | | |

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|--------|----------|-----|----|---|---|
| Total | 30552.92 | 299 | | | |

A one-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant effect of qualification on perceived leadership style, $F(3,296) = 12.92$, $p < .001$. Teachers with higher academic qualifications tended to perceive their school leadership as more transformational and distributed.

Table 5: *Correlation Matrix between Leadership Styles and School Effectiveness*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Instructional Leadership | 1 | | | | |
| 2. Transformational Leadership | .73** | 1 | | | |
| 3. Transactional Leadership | .58** | .61** | 1 | | |
| 4. Distributed Leadership | .69** | .76** | .55** | 1 | |
| 5. School Effectiveness | .74** | .82** | .63** | .78** | 1 |

Pearson correlation analysis indicated strong, positive relationships between all leadership styles and school effectiveness. Transformational leadership showed the highest correlation ($r = .82$, $p < .01$), suggesting it is the most influential predictor of quality education outcomes.

Table 6: *Regression Analysis: Predictors of School Effectiveness*

| Predictor | B | SE | β | t | p |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|------|------|
| Constant | 0.812 | 0.245 | | 3.31 | .001 |
| Instructional Leadership | 0.211 | 0.067 | .19 | 3.15 | .002 |
| Transformational Leadership | 0.384 | 0.072 | .38 | 5.33 | .000 |
| Transactional Leadership | 0.142 | 0.059 | .11 | 2.41 | .017 |
| Distributed Leadership | 0.278 | 0.064 | .26 | 4.34 | .000 |

$R^2 = .72$, $F(4,295) = 190.8$, $p < .001$

A multiple regression analysis revealed that transformational ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) and distributed leadership ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted school effectiveness, explaining 72% of the variance. This demonstrates that empowering and visionary leadership styles most strongly contribute to promoting quality education.

Findings

The study aimed to evaluate how various leadership styles transformational, transactional, instructional, and distributed contribute to school effectiveness in promoting quality education in Pakistan. Findings revealed that the mean scores for all leadership dimensions were above 3.80, reflecting positive perceptions among teachers and administrators. Transformational leadership had the highest mean ($M = 4.15$), indicating that leaders who inspire, motivate, and model ethical behavior were most influential in fostering school improvement.

Independent t-test results indicated no significant gender-based differences in perceptions of leadership styles or school effectiveness, suggesting similar viewpoints among male and female respondents. However, one-way ANOVA revealed significant variations across qualification levels, with M.Ed. and Ph.D. holders reporting higher satisfaction with leadership effectiveness than those with lower qualifications.

Correlation analysis showed strong, positive relationships between all leadership styles and school effectiveness, with transformational leadership showing the highest correlation ($r = .82$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis further confirmed that transformational and distributed

leadership were significant predictors of school effectiveness ($R^2 = .72$). These results demonstrate that schools led by visionary, collaborative, and empowering leaders achieve higher levels of quality education outcomes.

Discussion

The results align with global literature emphasize the transformative power of leadership in education. As Harris (2023) asserts, effective school leadership is a critical determinant of teacher motivation and student achievement. In the Pakistani context, where schools often face challenges such as limited resources, outdated pedagogical practices, and centralized decision-making, the role of transformational and distributed leadership becomes even more significant.

Transformational leadership stimulates creativity, teamwork, and advancement in career. It is also the case that Saif (2024) concluded in his research that leaders who energize and guide educators are the ones through which institutional adaptability is achieved. In the same vein, distributed leadership is a source of power for teachers as it provides them with an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process, consequently leading to a better school climate and accountability (Mifsud, 2024). The presence of academic qualifications has a striking effect on leadership perceptions, and this is in line with the view of Li and Karanxha (2022) who claim that professional knowledge and experience affect the way educators perceive the effectiveness of leadership. However, the gender differences in this study, which are not significant, are consistent with the findings of Ali et al. (2024) They argue that leadership perception in education is more influenced by the organizational culture than gender.

In a nutshell, these takeaways imply that the reform of leadership and the development of the professionals' skills are the mainstay of the school's progress in Pakistan. Introduction of participatory and visionary leadership styles may be instrumental in narrowing the existing gaps in the delivery of quality education as Ueda (2024) and Maqbool (2024) have indicated.

Conclusion

The essential point is that the study found that leadership style is the main factor deciding the effectiveness and quality of schools in Pakistan. Among the different leadership styles, the most prominent were transformational and distributed ones, as they made the greatest impact on the level of success of the schools, thus underlining the significance of a leader with a vision and a management style that appeals to members of the organization. Besides, the setting of teaching in the school community was a positive factor for the alignment of educational standards as institutional goals, while transactional leadership was less powerful although still significant in keeping the organization under control.

In essence, the evidence strongly supports the notion that the effectiveness of a school depends largely on the leadership qualities of its administrators. Principals who engage teachers in motivation, foster collaboration among staff, and share leadership roles in a fair manner tend to see favorable outcomes not only in academic but also in organizational aspects of the schools.

Recommendations

Following recommendations are made based on research findings:

1. School leaders should foster collaboration, shared vision, and professional empowerment to enhance institutional performance and teacher morale.

2. Teacher education institutions and school management authorities should design continuous professional development programs focusing on leadership capacity-building aligned with modern educational needs.
3. The Ministry of Education should integrate leadership training modules into national education reform policies to institutionalize effective school leadership practices across all levels.
4. Educational institutions should promote teamwork among teachers and administrators to improve collective problem-solving and decision-making.
5. Future studies should explore longitudinal impacts of leadership development programs and examine how digital transformation influences leadership effectiveness in Pakistani schools.

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