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## The School Head's Leadership Style and Its Impact on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract:**

This phenomenological study investigates the impact of the school head's leadership style on teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. Through thematic analysis of interviews with 20 teachers from primary and secondary schools, the study explores teachers' perceptions of leadership qualities exhibited by their school heads and their effects on teacher outcomes. The findings reveal that transformational, distributive, and servant leadership styles are associated with positive teacher perceptions, fostering a supportive and empowering work environment. Teachers value leadership approaches characterized by inspiration, collaboration, and empathy, as they contribute to enhancing teacher morale and effectiveness. However, the study acknowledges the contextual specificity of its findings and the limitations inherent in the research design. While the results offer valuable insights within a particular educational context, caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings to other settings.

**Keywords:** school leadership, leadership style, teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, transformational leadership, distributive leadership

**Introduction:**

Effective leadership in schools is crucial for fostering positive teacher outcomes such as job satisfaction and a sense of efficacy. The leadership style adopted by school heads plays a significant role in shaping the working environment and experiences of teachers. Understanding the impact of different leadership styles on teacher perceptions is essential for improving overall school effectiveness and teacher retention.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between leadership styles and teacher outcomes. For instance, a study by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) found that transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, was positively associated with teacher satisfaction and efficacy. Similarly, research by Hallinger and Heck (1998) highlighted the importance of distributive leadership, where leadership responsibilities are shared among various stakeholders, in promoting teacher satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.



However, while much research has focused on the general relationship between leadership styles and teacher outcomes, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of the school head's leadership style on teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. Phenomenological research offers a valuable approach to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers within their unique organizational contexts.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate how the leadership style of school heads influences teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. By examining the subjective experiences of teachers within the school environment, this research aims to provide insights into the mechanisms through which leadership styles impact teacher attitudes and behaviors.

### **Literature Review:**

The role of school leadership in shaping teacher outcomes, such as job satisfaction and sense of efficacy, has garnered significant attention in educational research. Leadership styles adopted by school heads play a crucial role in creating a conducive work environment and influencing teacher attitudes and behaviors. This literature review synthesizes existing research on the relationship between the school head's leadership style and teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction.

Transformational leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Bass, 1985), has been widely studied in educational contexts. Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) found a positive association between transformational leadership and teacher satisfaction, highlighting the role of school leaders in fostering a shared vision and motivating teachers to achieve organizational goals. Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) reported a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and teacher efficacy, suggesting that transformational leaders empower teachers to excel in their roles (Martinez, et al., 2023).

Transactional leadership, which focuses on contingent rewards and management-by-exception (Bass, 1985), has also been examined in relation to teacher outcomes. While transactional leadership may provide structure and clarity in organizational processes, its impact on teacher satisfaction and efficacy appears to be mixed. Some studies have found positive correlations between transactional leadership and teacher satisfaction (e.g., Pounder, 2006), while others have reported negligible effects (e.g., Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004). Similarly, the relationship between transactional leadership and teacher efficacy remains inconclusive, with some studies suggesting a positive association (e.g., Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and others finding no significant effects (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Distributive leadership, characterized by the shared distribution of leadership responsibilities among various stakeholders (Spillane et al., 2004), has gained prominence in educational leadership research. Hallinger and Heck (1998) identified distributive leadership as a key factor contributing to teacher satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. By involving teachers in decision-making processes and fostering collaboration, distributive leaders create a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among staff members (Harris, 2008). Furthermore, research suggests that distributive leadership positively influences teacher efficacy by providing opportunities for professional growth and autonomy (Goddard et al., 2004).

Servant leadership, which prioritizes the needs of others and emphasizes ethical behavior and serving others (Greenleaf, 1977), has emerged as a promising approach in educational leadership. Spears and Lawrence (2002) argued that servant leaders create a supportive and nurturing environment that enhances teacher well-being and job satisfaction. By focusing on the holistic development of teachers and fostering trust and empathy, servant leaders promote a sense of belonging and commitment among staff members (Liden et al., 2008). Additionally, research suggests that servant leadership positively influences teacher efficacy by empowering teachers to make meaningful contributions to the school community (Wang & Cheng, 2010).

Authentic leadership, characterized by self-awareness, transparency, and moral integrity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), has gained traction in educational leadership research. Liden et al. (2008) found a positive relationship between authentic leadership and teacher satisfaction, suggesting that authentic leaders foster trust and open communication within the school community (Uy, et al., 2023). By modeling ethical behavior and values, authentic leaders create a culture of honesty and accountability that enhances teacher morale and job satisfaction (Gardner et al., 2011). Moreover, research indicates that authentic leadership positively influences teacher efficacy by promoting self-reflection and professional growth (Rego, et al. 2016).

The literature review highlights the importance of the school head's leadership style in shaping teacher outcomes, including job satisfaction and sense of efficacy. Transformational, transactional, distributive, servant, and authentic leadership styles each have unique implications for teacher well-being and effectiveness (Groenewald, et al., 2023). While transformational, distributive, servant, and authentic leadership styles are generally associated with positive teacher outcomes, the relationship between transactional leadership and teacher satisfaction and efficacy remains



equivocal. Future research should continue to explore the complex interplay between leadership styles and teacher outcomes to inform effective leadership practices in educational settings.

**Methodology:****Participants:**

The study involved a purposive sample of 20 teachers from various primary and secondary schools in the region. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate and their diverse experiences in working with different school heads. The sample included both male and female teachers with varying years of teaching experience.

**Data Collection:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to explore their perceptions of the school head's leadership style and its impact on their sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed descriptions of participants' experiences. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into specific aspects of leadership style and its effects on teacher outcomes.

**Data Analysis:**

A phenomenological approach was employed to analyze the interview data, focusing on identifying patterns and themes related to the school head's leadership style and its impact on teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were then coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. Codes were derived from the data and organized into broader themes representing the key findings of the study.

**Trustworthiness:**

Several measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings. Member checking was conducted by providing participants with a summary of their interview responses and inviting them to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Peer debriefing was also carried out by consulting with colleagues familiar with phenomenological research to validate the credibility and validity of the findings. Additionally, the researcher maintained reflexivity throughout the study by documenting personal biases and assumptions that may have influenced the interpretation of the data.

**Ethical Considerations:**

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of participants in the reporting of findings.

**Findings:****Theme 1: Transformational Leadership**

The participants overwhelmingly depicted their school head as embodying transformational leadership qualities, including inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. For instance, P2 expressed, "Our school head always motivates us to strive for excellence and supports us in pursuing professional development opportunities." Similarly, another participant, P5 remarked, "The school head encourages us to think creatively and challenges us to reach our full potential."

This finding resonates with previous research emphasizing the positive impact of transformational leadership on teacher satisfaction and efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Transformational leaders inspire and empower teachers, creating a supportive work environment conducive to their growth and development. As Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) noted, transformational leadership fosters a shared vision and motivation among teachers, ultimately enhancing their job satisfaction and sense of efficacy.

The participants' accounts highlight the transformative influence of leadership behaviors that prioritize motivation, innovation, and personal growth. By nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and professional development, transformational leaders empower teachers to excel in their roles and contribute positively to the school community. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) suggested, transformational leaders provide teachers with the support and encouragement needed to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

The alignment between the participants' perceptions and previous literature underscores the significance of transformational leadership in shaping positive teacher outcomes. School leaders who embody transformational qualities have the potential to create a dynamic and engaging work environment where teachers feel valued, motivated, and empowered to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

**Theme 2: Distributive Leadership**



The thematic analysis revealed a significant emphasis on distributive leadership among several participants, who highlighted the importance of sharing leadership responsibilities among various stakeholders within their schools. One P8 remarked, "Our school head values input from all staff members and involves us in decision-making processes." P12 also noted, "The collaborative approach to leadership fosters a sense of ownership and teamwork among teachers."

This finding resonates with previous research, particularly the work of Hallinger and Heck (1998), which underscores the positive association between distributive leadership and teacher satisfaction. By involving teachers in decision-making processes and fostering a collaborative environment, distributive leaders create a sense of collective responsibility and commitment among staff members. As Hallinger and Heck (1998) suggested, this collaborative approach to leadership enhances overall school effectiveness by harnessing the diverse expertise and perspectives of all stakeholders.

The participants' accounts highlight the importance of inclusivity and shared decision-making in fostering a positive school culture. By valuing the input of all staff members and promoting collaboration, distributive leaders empower teachers to take ownership of their work and contribute meaningfully to the school community (Cordova Jr, et al., 2024). This sense of ownership and teamwork is essential for building trust and cohesion among staff members, ultimately enhancing school effectiveness and teacher satisfaction.

The findings of this study underscore the significance of distributive leadership in creating a supportive and collaborative work environment within schools. By sharing leadership responsibilities and involving teachers in decision-making processes, distributive leaders foster a sense of collective ownership and commitment among staff members, leading to improved teacher satisfaction and overall school effectiveness.

### **Theme 3: Servant Leadership**

The thematic analysis revealed a notable emphasis on servant leadership among several participants, who portrayed their school head as exemplifying qualities such as empathy, humility, and a commitment to serving others. P15 stressed, "Our school head genuinely cares about our well-being and always puts the needs of teachers and students first." P18 said, "The servant leadership approach creates a culture of trust and respect within the school community."

This finding aligns with previous literature, particularly the work of Spears and Lawrence (2002), which underscores the positive impact of servant leadership on teacher morale and job satisfaction. By prioritizing the needs of teachers and fostering a supportive work environment, servant leaders cultivate a sense of belonging and commitment among staff members. As Spears and Lawrence (2002) suggested, this focus on serving others creates a culture of trust and respect within the school community, ultimately enhancing teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction.

The participants' accounts underscore the transformative influence of servant leadership behaviors in shaping positive teacher outcomes. By prioritizing the well-being of teachers and students, servant leaders create a supportive and nurturing environment where staff members feel valued and respected (Angtud, et al., 2023). This sense of belonging and commitment is essential for fostering collaboration, trust, and ultimately, teacher effectiveness within the school community.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of servant leadership in creating a positive and supportive work environment within schools. By embodying qualities such as empathy, humility, and a focus on serving others, servant leaders foster a culture of trust and respect that enhances teacher morale and job satisfaction. As such, servant leadership represents a valuable approach for school leaders seeking to promote teacher effectiveness and overall school success.

### **Discussion:**

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that aligns with existing literature regarding the crucial relationship between school head's leadership style and teacher outcomes. Transformational, distributive, and servant leadership styles emerged as positively correlated with teachers' perceptions of efficacy and job satisfaction, underscoring the significance of fostering a supportive and empowering work environment within educational institutions (Abella, et al., 2024).

The thematic analysis unveiled a clear preference among teachers for leadership approaches characterized by inspiration, collaboration, and empathy. Participants expressed a strong inclination towards leaders who prioritize motivating and empowering their staff, facilitating teamwork, and demonstrating genuine care for their well-being. By embracing transformational, distributive, and servant leadership practices, school heads can effectively cultivate a culture of trust, respect, and shared vision within the school community, thereby enhancing teacher morale and effectiveness.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this study's findings, particularly the contextual specificity of the participants' perceptions. While the results offer valuable insights into the dynamics of leadership



and teacher outcomes within a particular setting, caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings to other educational contexts (Andrin, et al., 2023). Therefore, future research endeavors should aim to explore the intricate interplay between leadership styles and teacher outcomes across diverse educational settings to inform more comprehensive and nuanced leadership practices. By adopting transformational, distributive, and servant leadership approaches, school heads have the potential to create a supportive and empowering work environment conducive to enhancing teacher satisfaction, efficacy, and ultimately, student success. As educational institutions continue to navigate the complexities of fostering positive teacher outcomes, a concerted effort towards embracing effective leadership practices is imperative for fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement within schools.

### Conclusion:

This study offers valuable insights into the relationship between school head's leadership style and teacher outcomes, specifically focusing on teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. Through thematic analysis of participant responses, it became evident that transformational, distributive, and servant leadership styles were associated with positive teacher perceptions, highlighting the importance of fostering a supportive and empowering work environment within educational institutions.

The findings underscore the significance of leadership approaches that prioritize inspiration, collaboration, and empathy, as articulated by the participants. By adopting transformational, distributive, and servant leadership practices, school heads can cultivate a culture of trust, respect, and shared vision within the school community, ultimately enhancing teacher morale and effectiveness.

However, it is essential to recognize the contextual specificity of the study's findings and the limitations inherent in the research design. While the results offer valuable insights within the specific context of this study, caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings to other educational settings. Future research endeavors should aim to explore the complex interplay between leadership styles and teacher outcomes across diverse educational contexts to inform more comprehensive and nuanced leadership practices.

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