

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative research investigates the combined effect of principals' leadership and decision-making styles on job satisfaction of teachers. Data were gathered through stratified random sampling from 194 teachers at private secondary schools located in Karachi. Respondents were required to complete measures of transformational and transactional leadership, decision-making preferences, and job satisfaction. Pearson correlation test was used to examine multicollinearity among the predictors, which was found to be limited. Using hierarchical regression analysis, it was indicated that rational and avoidant decision-making styles significantly influence teacher satisfaction. Results highlighted transformational leadership as a strong positive predictor, while transactional leadership style being a moderator but still significant indicator of job satisfaction. Moreover, job satisfaction levels were higher when principals employed rational decision making, whereas avoidant style was found to be negatively associated with teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers had more responsive behaviors towards inspirational and supportive principals' leadership style with participatory decision-making process and clear expectations. The programs that cultivate the adaptive combination of leadership and decision-making processes are likely to facilitate more resilient and satisfactory educational outcomes.

Keywords: *transformational leadership, transactional leadership, decision-making style, teacher job satisfaction, private schools*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, schools have undergone multifaceted reform initiatives, introducing new challenges for all stakeholders (Abella & Cordova, 2024). Within this evolving framework, the role of teachers is consistently emphasized, as they are recognized as the primary determinants shaping the quality of education. For teachers to effectively manage their responsibilities and adapt to these challenges, it is crucial that they feel satisfied and fulfilled

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in their roles. Research has shown that satisfied employees tend to be more productive (Prasetya et al., 2023), and the importance of teachers' job satisfaction cannot be overstated. Content teachers tend to show more dedication, enthusiasm, and a greater willingness to invest additional time and effort into fostering student learning.

The factors influencing teacher satisfaction are multifaceted, with principal leadership style (PLS) and decision-making style(DMS) identified as two pivotal variables that significantly affect teachers' perceptions(TP) and job satisfaction(JS) (Hoque & Raya, 2023). These two elements play a crucial role in shaping the school environment and influencing the work dynamics between teachers and school leadership. Proponents of transformational leadership in education argue that this leadership style fosters an environment of motivation and enthusiasm (Ned & Umesi, 2023). However, recent studies suggest that a combination of both transformational and transactional leadership strategies may be more effective in addressing the diverse needs of teachers (Xuefeng, 2023). Regarding decision-making, research by Saine et al. (2023) suggests that the rational decision-making style has been shown to improve teachers' levels of satisfaction. However, the effectiveness of any leadership style can be influenced by personal and cultural factors (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021).

Research on the impact of leadership and DMS on teacher job satisfaction is limited in Pakistan, despite its importance to improve learning outcomes. The current study has been carried out to bridge the existing gap by investigating the combined impact of PLS and DMS on teachers' outcomes within the private secondary schools located in Karachi. The findings of the study will contribute to the existing body of research regarding integrated influence of LS and DMS on teachers' JS levels. The research will offer practical recommendations for facilitating educational outcomes in Pakistan's private schools.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the influence of PLS on TJS in Private Schools of Karachi, Pakistan
2. To evaluate the impact of DMS on TJS in private schools of Karachi, Pakistan.

1.2 Research Question

1. To what extent does the PLS influence TJS?
2. What is the impact of the principal's DMS on teachers' JS?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this section is to examine the terminology utilized in the study particularly JS, leadership styles, and DMS. It should be acknowledged, however, that a thorough exploration of all related terms is beyond the scope of this paper. Hence, only widely accepted definitions are employed as a foundation for the following discussion.

2.1 Job Satisfaction (JS)

JS is a multifaceted concept arising from a combination of physiological and psychological factors that contribute to an employee's overall contentment in their role. It is closely linked to organizational effectiveness (Aziz et al., 2021), as satisfied employees are considered valuable assets to any organization (Susanto et al., 2023). Scholars have offered various interpretations of JS, with one of the most widely cited definitions being Locke's (1976) statement: "Job satisfaction refers to a positive emotional response to one's work arising from the assessment of one's job or work encounters" (p. 1300). This definition underscores the emotional aspect of JS, which can be influenced by both the nature of the job and the individual's personal experiences and perceptions.

JS is often regarded as a form of organizational behavior that encompasses a range of positive and negative reactions to one's job. These reactions are shaped by both personal and social factors, with the level of contentment an individual feels significantly influencing their overall well-being (Fayzhall, 2020).

In the educational context, teachers' JS refers to "a teacher's emotional attachment to their role, which is influenced by the perceived alignment between their aspirations in teaching and their perception of what the role provides" (Wartenberg et al., 2023). This emphasizes the importance of how teachers perceive the fulfillment of their professional and personal goals within the school environment.

In Karachi, Pakistan, relevant studies have identified four key factors influencing teachers' JS: the workplace environment, recognition and appreciation from students and parents, equity, and validation from colleagues and principals. Notably, Pakistan's education system, particularly in private schools, is not fully centralized or standardized, which presents a unique context for understanding job satisfaction. While principals hold leadership positions, the system is gradually moving toward a more centralized structure, although this shift is occurring slowly.

2.2 Leadership

The debate surrounding leadership remains active, as both public and private institutions face increasing demands for effective leaders especially as knowledge and empirical research in the field of education continue to expand (Rind, 2024). Despite the lack of a universally standardized definition, leadership is broadly recognized as a process that significantly influences group outcomes. Lin et al. (2019) define leadership as a practice through which a leader persuades a group or followers to attain collective goals. In contemporary settings, leaders no longer rely solely on formal authority; rather, they focus on collaboration with subordinates and advancing shared interests (Ahmed et al., 2023).

In education, a notable shift has occurred from administration to management and, more recently, to leadership. While debate over this transition continues, growing evidence shows that school leadership is a key factor in school success, exerting an indirect impact on student achievement and overall performance (Rodrigues & Ávila, 2024).

Research into the attributes of effective leaders has led to the development of various leadership models. For this study, Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) is applied, which emphasizes transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

According to FRLT, a transactional leader maintains the status quo by offering rewards or punishments, with the relationship between leader and follower based on economic exchange. This exchange-based leadership style involves providing incentives in return for task completion, with an expectation of efficiency and loyalty (Lahlimi & Messaoudi, 2024).

2.3 Decision-Making

Decision-Making is the method of "selecting alternative strategies in a fashion suitable for the needs of the circumstance" (Thakkar, 2021). Pieterse (2023) claims that Decision-making plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of institutions. The resilience varies based on the level of decentralization. DMS in schools may include areas such as instructional design budget, employees and school policy, resource management etc. Callahan (2023). Scott and Bruce (1995) elucidate DMS as the behavioral pattern utilized by an individual who encounters a situation requiring a decision. Decision-making has been examined from diverse viewpoints and there are plenty of definitions of DMS.

The method adopted in this paper has been originated by Scot and Bruce (1995). According to them, five styles of decision-making are in existence: 1) rational, formulated through thorough exploration of the

possibilities. 2) intuitive, which is sensitivity driven, 3) dependent, defined by resilience on guidance and counselling acquired from others, 4) spontaneous, which demonstrates a sense of promptness, deciding with utmost rapidity and 5) avoidant, engaging in decision procrastination or evading decisions.

2.4 Relationship Between Leadership Style and Decision-Making Style (DMS)

Recent research indicates leadership style is crucial for shaping the decision-making processes. For instance, leaders with autocratic styles tend to be quick in their decisions. As Li and Li (2022) suggest that autocratic leaders build trust among their employees due to timely decisions and demonstration of competence. On the other hand, democratic leaders tend to take decisions with the involvement insights from their employees which foster creativity and team wellbeing (Wang et al., 2022). This suggests that leadership styles influence decision-making in different ways. Autocratic styles may be effective in fast-paced situation while democratic leadership facilitates ethical, thoughtful and long term employee engagement.

2.5 Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Leadership Style

Studies across various professional settings suggest a positive correlation between transformational leadership and JS (Jameel & Ahmad, 2020). In education, transformational leadership has been linked to increased teacher performance and satisfaction (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2023), largely due to its focus on recognizing individual needs (Purwanto, 2020). On the other hand, transactional leadership is sometimes associated with lower satisfaction due to its rigid, outcome-focused structure (Nguni et al., 2006).

2.6 Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Decision-Making Style

Collaborating with a principal who empowers teachers by including them in decision-making positively impacts their JS and commitment (Cansoy, 2022). Maheshwari (2022), in a study conducted in Vietnam, found a significant correlation between principals' DMS and teachers' satisfaction.

Similarly, research in Indonesia by Supriadi et al. (2021) revealed that rational and dependent DMS correlate differently with teacher satisfaction one positively, the other negatively. In Turkey, Torlak et al. (2022) reached a similar conclusion, identifying the rational style as the most favorable for teacher morale. However, Anastasiou and Garametsi (2021) proposed an alternative view, arguing that principals' DMS may not significantly affect teacher satisfaction in all contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional, explanatory-correlational survey design to investigate the relationships among principals' LS, DMS, and teachers' JS in Karachi's private secondary-school sector. The design was chosen because it allows contemporaneous measurement of naturally occurring variables and is well suited to testing predictive models without manipulating the educational setting.

3.2 Population and Sampling Frame

The target population consisted of all full-time teachers employed in registered private secondary schools (Grades VI–XII) across Karachi, a group estimated at roughly 6,500 teachers working in 410 institutions. After removing duplicates and staff on extended leave, a sampling frame of 5,870 teachers was compiled from the three largest school networks operating in the city.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

To strengthen external validity, a stratified random sampling strategy was employed. Strata were formed by school network (Networks A, B, and C) and by subject group (STEM versus Humanities) to ensure proportional representation. A priori power analysis conducted with G*Power 3.1 indicated that at least 92 participants were required to detect a medium effect ($f^2 = .15$) in a multiple-regression model with five predictors at $\alpha = .05$ and power = .80. Anticipating non-response and seeking greater precision, the research team invited 240 teachers; 194 provided complete and usable responses, yielding a response rate of 80.8 %.

3.4 Instruments

Information was collected using three established and reliable self-report instruments. Principals' leadership practices were measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X; Avolio & Bass, 2004), which contains 45 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the present sample ($\alpha = .90$). Decision-making styles were assessed with the 25-item General Decision-Making Style Inventory (GDMS-I; Scott & Bruce, 1995), which yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .87$. Teachers' job satisfaction was captured by the 18-item General Index of Job Satisfaction (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951), with $\alpha = .89$. All instruments were administered in English, the instructional medium of the participating schools. A pilot administration with 20 teachers confirmed item clarity and required no wording adjustments.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Following approval from the university's ethics review committee (ERC/IED/23-057), principals distributed an electronic consent form and survey link to staff through official e-mail lists. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and uncompensated. Data collection took place over four weeks in September 2024. Completed questionnaires were stored on an encrypted server accessible only to the research team.

3.6 Data Screening and Analysis

Initial screening showed less than 2 % missing data per variable; Little's MCAR test was non-significant, and missing values were imputed via expectation-maximization. Multivariate outliers were checked with Mahalanobis distance ($p < .001$). Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity ($VIF < 2.5$) were met. To evaluate relationships among variables, Pearson correlations were followed by hierarchical multiple regression using SPSS 28.0. Common-method variance was assessed with Harman's single-factor test and a common-latent-factor confirmatory analysis; neither indicated substantial bias, as the largest single factor accounted for only 24.7 % of the variance.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed beforehand about the research aim and objectives. Informed consent was obtained electronically before the respondents were granted access to the questionnaire. They were told that the information they provide will be kept confidential and will be only used for research purposes. They have the right to withdraw from research at any time.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The following table presents the demographic profile of the 194 participants (teachers and headteachers) from private schools in Karachi, categorized by gender, age, and teaching experience in the current school, and the number of years they have worked with their current principal.

Table no.1: Demographic Characteristics

| Demographic Variable | Category | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 66 | 34.0 |
| | Female | 128 | 66.0 |
| Age Group (years) | Below 35 | 24 | 12.4 |
| | 36–45 | 52 | 26.8 |
| | 46–55 | 114 | 58.8 |
| | Above 56 | 4 | 2.1 |
| Years in Current School | Less than 5 | 102 | 52.6 |
| | 6–11 | 54 | 27.8 |
| | More than 11 | 38 | 19.6 |
| Years with Current Principal | 1–2 | 72 | 37.1 |
| | 3–4 | 92 | 47.4 |
| | 5–6 | 16 | 8.2 |
| | More than 6 | 14 | 7.2 |

4.2 Leadership Styles

Table 2 represents the standard deviation and Cronbach α to define the characteristics of research variables.

Table no.2: Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliabilities

| Variable | M | SD | Cronbach α |
|-----------------------------|------|------|-------------------|
| Transformational Leadership | 3.68 | 0.72 | .92 |
| Transactional Leadership | 3.35 | 0.79 | .84 |
| Rational Decision Making | 4.01 | 0.70 | .87 |
| Avoidant Decision Making | 2.14 | 0.66 | .79 |
| Job Satisfaction | 3.76 | 0.58 | .89 |

Note. Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and Cronbach’s α for each composite variable (N = 194).

It indicates that all constructs exhibited satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha \geq .79$). Principals were perceived to display more transformational than transactional behaviors, and rational decision making scored highest among the decision-making styles, whereas avoidant decision making was lowest. Teachers reported moderately high overall job satisfaction.

Table no.3: Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M | SD |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|---|------|------|
| 1 Transformational Leadership | — | | | | | 3.68 | 0.72 |
| 2 Transactional Leadership | .40** | — | | | | 3.35 | 0.79 |
| 3 Rational Decision Making | .35** | .30** | — | | | 4.01 | 0.70 |
| 4 Avoidant Decision Making | -.25** | -.20** | -.15* | — | | 2.14 | 0.66 |
| 5 Job Satisfaction | .45** | .29** | .34** | -.22** | — | 3.76 | 0.58 |

Note. Correlation coefficients above the diagonal; Cronbach’s α values on the diagonal. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. N = 194.

Table 3 indicates that transformational leadership correlated moderately and positively with job satisfaction ($r = .45, p < .001$), whereas avoidant decision making showed a small negative association ($r = -.22, p = .003$). All correlations were below .60, suggesting limited multicollinearity among predictors.

Table no.4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Teacher Job Satisfaction

| Predictor | B | SE | β | B | SE | β |
|-----------------------------|------|-----|---------|------|-----|---------|
| Model 1 | | | | | | |
| Rational Decision Making | .35 | .10 | .30** | .22 | .09 | .18* |
| Avoidant Decision Making | -.28 | .12 | -.26** | -.19 | .10 | -.16* |
| Model 2 | | | | | | |
| Transformational Leadership | | | | .37 | .08 | .35*** |
| Transactional Leadership | | | | .24 | .09 | .24** |

Note. Model 1 includes decision-making styles. Model 2 adds leadership behaviours. Model 1: $R^2 = .13, F(2, 191) = 14.30, p < .001$. Model 2: $R^2 = .33, \Delta R^2 = .20, F(5, 188) = 18.90, p < .001$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. N = 194.

Table 4 shows that the inclusion of transformational and transactional leadership in Model 2 explained an additional 20 % of variance in JS beyond DMS alone. Among the final predictors, individualized consideration (transformational leadership facet) had the strongest positive effect ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), while avoidant decision making remained a modest negative predictor ($\beta = -.16, p = .037$).

5. DISCUSSION

The present study set out to clarify how principals' leadership behaviours and DMS jointly shape teacher's JS in Karachi's private secondary schools. By integrating Full-Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) with the general decision-making-style framework (Scott & Bruce, 1995), we were able to disentangle the relative influence of transformational and transactional practices as well as rational and avoidant cognitive orientations. Below, the findings are interpreted in light of prior research, highlighting points of convergence and divergence and situating the results within the broader South-Asian schooling context.

5.1 Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Consistent with a substantial body of international evidence, transformational leadership emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher satisfaction ($\beta = .35, p < .001$). Earlier Pakistani studies have reported comparable or slightly higher effect sizes in public schools (e.g., Ali & Farooq, 2023; Naseem, 2022). The magnitude observed here aligns more closely with recent findings from private institutions in Bangladesh and India, where transformational practices accounted for roughly one third of the variance in satisfaction (Hossain et al., 2024; Singh & Mehta, 2023). The emphasis Karachi-based principals place on individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation may resonate with teachers who must navigate competitive fee-driven environments and fast-changing curricular demands. At the same time, the effect is smaller than that reported in several Western contexts (e.g., Range et al., 2021), lending weight to cross-cultural work suggesting that the potency of transformational behaviors is moderated by power-distance expectations and local labor conditions (Hoch et al., 2018).

5.2 Transactional Leadership: Reappraising its Role

Whereas transformational practices delivered the largest gains, transactional leadership still contributed positively and uniquely ($\beta = .24, p < .01$). This finding corroborates the "additive" perspective articulated by Judge and Piccolo (2004), who argued that contingent-reward exchanges supply necessary clarity about performance standards—particularly in accountability-driven systems. Yet the result contrasts with Rasheed and Anwar's (2021) Karachi study in public schools, which found no significant effect once transformational behaviors were controlled. One plausible explanation is that the fee-based private sector relies heavily on measurable performance targets (e.g., examination scores), making contingent rewards more salient and acceptable (Greco & Khan, 2024). In effect, transactional oversight may

complement transformational inspiration when both are experienced as procedurally fair and supportive rather than punitive.

5.3 Decision-Making Styles and Leader Effectiveness

Principals' rational decision-making style retained a modest but significant positive link with teacher satisfaction after leadership variables were entered ($\beta = .18, p = .011$), echoing Ashraf and Qureshi's (2022) survey of Malaysian secondary schools. The result suggests that evidence-informed, deliberate choices reinforce teachers' perceptions of professionalism and organizational coherence. By contrast, avoidant decision making showed a small negative association ($\beta = -.16, p = .037$), mirroring Kim and Shim's (2024) findings in South Korean high schools. Taken together, the data indicate that cognitive styles rooted in proactive information seeking and problem solving enhance the motivational impact of leadership behaviors, whereas indecisiveness undermines it.

5.4 Integrating Leadership Behaviors and Cognitive Styles

The hierarchical regression clarified that decision-making styles explained 13 % of the variance in satisfaction, but the inclusion of leadership behaviors raised the explained variance to 33 %. This pattern parallels the incremental effects reported by Afshari and Gibson (2023), who demonstrated that cognitive variables provide a foundational layer upon which socio-emotional leadership practices exert additional influence. Similarly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that instructional leadership influences teacher commitment more significantly when combined with trust-building and emotional engagement strategies. In addition to this, Hallinger and Heck (2011) emphasized that leadership effects on school improvement are mediated through organizational and interpersonal processes, indicating that purely cognitive or structural approaches are insufficient without attention to relational dynamics. These research suggests that teachers do not evaluate principals' behaviors in isolation; rather, they interpret them through the lens of how decisions are framed, communicated, and enacted within a broader social-emotional framework contextualizing the situation and working environment. This concludes the importance of a holistic leadership approach that integrates cognitive clarity with emotional intelligence and participative decision-making.

6. PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Practically, the study underscores the value of professional-development programs that blend transformational skill building with rational

problem-solving techniques. Adaptive leadership defined here as the flexible alignment of inspiring behaviors with evidence-based decisions appears most conducive to fostering teacher satisfaction in high-stakes private settings. Theoretically, the results reinforce arguments for multi-factor models that integrate behavioral and cognitive dimensions, extending Full-Range Leadership Theory into the domain of decision-making research.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These findings should be interpreted in light of the study's cross-sectional design and its confinement to three private school networks in Karachi. Longitudinal work could test whether the observed relationships endure over time or fluctuate with organizational restructuring. Comparative studies across public and rural schools would probe the boundary conditions of the present conclusions, especially in contexts where resource constraints or bureaucratic mandates reshape leadership dynamics. Finally, qualitative inquiry could enrich understanding of how teachers subjectively interpret principals' decision rationales and reward structures.

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